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Monday 9 May 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 9 mai 2016

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 May 2016

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome Anne van Leeuwen, consul general of the Netherlands, who is here today for the annual Dutch Heritage Month flag raising, which is taking place right after question period. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Coteau: On behalf of Minister Naqvi, I'd like to welcome Mattias Falkner, Caroline Falkner and Beth Martin, who are the family of page captain Benjamin Falkner, here to the Legislature today.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to welcome RNs from Windsor and Essex county: Carol Ahpin, Karen Bertrand, Vicki McKenna, Jo-Dee Brown, Cheryl Colborne, Bruce Jewell, Sandy Kravets, Barb Marcolin, Barbara Porter, Veronika Pulley, Sherri Sherbo and Gwen Spencer-Giswein. They are here to help us celebrate Nursing Week.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome the delegation from Languages Canada to Queen's Park today. I would like to personally welcome Gonzalo Peralta, the executive manager, who is here along with chairs of the Ontario chapter, staff, members of the board, and international students who choose to come to Ontario to learn the English language and pursue their education. I invite everyone at Queen's Park to join us at the Languages Canada reception this afternoon from 4 to 6 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a great day for Nepean-Carleton and my dear friend, page captain Faiz Jan. His parents are all the way here from Ottawa today. I want to recognize them: Shireeh and Salman Jan, and his little brother, Faraaz Jan. They are joining us here in the gallery today, and I'm looking forward to taking them to the legislative dining room right after question period.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome grade 5 students from Wilkinson school in my riding. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, today is a really special day. We have some wonderful guests. You may have seen them on the national news last night. They're women and girls with Up With Women. Last night, we saw in the news powerful stories of resilient and strong moms who used to be homeless, as told by their very brave kids.

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 mai 2016

I'm proud to welcome Helen Vozinov and her daughters Angelina and Gabriela, Kimberley Niles and her daughter Destinee Simon, Lola Lawson and her son Livity Lawson-Bernard, Doina Oncel and her daughter Sarah Brindusha Cisse, Benya Arroyave, and the director of Up With Women, Lia Grimanis. Welcome all. We're delighted you're here.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today we're joined by two retired Toronto police detectives. Please welcome to Queen's Park Deborah Vittie-Pagliaro and Suzanne Kernohan, who are joining me for lunch today.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome, in the public gallery, grade 10 students from St. Augustine Catholic High School, from the great riding of Oak Ridges-Markham.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome to the members' gallery this morning Lindsay Stevenson, my brand new LA.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further introductions? I'm not sure if the member from Renfrew—further introductions?

This morning, I missed something that I would normally do every Monday when this happens. This week, the House will be paying tribute to a deceased member, Mr. Leo Jordan, and I would refer our prayers during Monday to the repose of the soul of Mr. Jordan.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Last Thursday, hundreds of families of autistic children came to Queen's Park to ask for help; I should be asking about that. Last month, I learned about the closing of 16 beds and the cutting of 35 jobs at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital; I should be asking about that. It's Mining Week, and the government still hasn't invested a cent into northern Ontario's Ring of Fire; I should be asking about that.

But unfortunately, for a record fifth time, the government is being investigated by the OPP, so I have to ask about that. How has the Premier allowed five OPP investigations to take place under her watch? How is it possible that not a single member of her cabinet or her staff has taken responsibility?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the decisions that we have made around

investment in energy and investment in electricity, we have made very different decisions than the Leader of the Opposition would have made. I absolutely understand that.

When we came into office, the energy system in Ontario, the electricity system, was degraded. It needed investments—

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's false.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It absolutely is not false, Mr. Speaker. The fact is, we have invested in over 10,000 lines across this province, kilometres of line across this province. We have shut down the last of the coal-fired plants. We've invested in renewables, and we have a clean electricity grid as a result of that: no smog days, a reduction in the pollutants in the air. We've made very different decisions than the opposition would have.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: I asked a question about needing some level of apology or contrition on five OPP investigations into this government on the watch of this Premier, and all I get is an example of deflection and dodging at its best.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be a bit more specific. When Trillium Power Wind did a freedom-of-information search, looking for numerous documents back and forth with the Premier and the Cabinet Office on the offshore wind project, they turned up zero—not a single document. In fact, between the fall of 2010 and February 11, 2011, there was numerous correspondence. Unfortunately, all the correspondence on the government's side completely disappeared.

My question is, were those documents deleted, double-deleted, or did the Liberals cancel the offshore wind program on a whim to save their own seats?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, when the Leader of the Opposition is talking about the Premier's office, I will remind him that I became Premier in 2013—just as a reminder of the chronology. As I have said in this House, I was not aware of any investigation until the media reports. If we are contacted, we will, as always, co-operate fully.

We have made changes. We have made changes in the way we deal with documents in this government. Under my watch, we have new rules in place, including mandatory record-keeping rules and staff training. The accountability act prohibits the wilful deletion of records and creates a penalty. In fact, we worked very closely with the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the time to make sure we got it right. We implemented her recommendations as we put new rules in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Since the Premier has referenced the privacy commissioner, let me note that the 2013 report of the privacy commissioner detailed the deletion of the emails in the gas plant scandal. The report said that the Minister of Energy's chief of staff confessed to deleting all the emails. At the time, this was seen as an unethical attempt to hide evidence of the gas plant scandal from the public.

Trillium's lawsuit now proves the Liberals didn't just delete evidence from the gas plant scandal; they also deleted evidence from the cancellation of the offshore wind program.

These could be key pieces of evidence in Trillium's lawsuit, and if Trillium wins, the people of Ontario could be on the hook for \$500 million.

My question is: Will the Premier explain to the people of Ontario and this Legislature why they should pay for the potential illegal activities of this government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will just say again to the Leader of the Opposition that when I came into this office, we changed the rules around record-keeping. I will read from the Information and Privacy Commissioner's report—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come to order. Next step: individuals.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will read from the Information and Privacy Commissioner's annual report from June 2014. What was said there:

"I have appreciated the co-operation I have received from Premier Kathleen Wynne ... the Premier issued a directive in accordance with the recommendations made in the report and committed the government to greater transparency and accountability.... In addition, political staff received in-depth training on record retention responsibilities. I applaud these developments."

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. This government runs self-congratulatory radio ads at the same time as closing hospital beds. They kick kids off—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: The truth hurts over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're not helping.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: They kick kids off the autism treatment wait-list just to make the list look smaller. At the same time, they add them to another wait-list. They cancelled the gas plants at a cost of \$1 billion just to save a few seats. They cancelled offshore wind projects in Liberal-held ridings. Now the evidence has been deleted—again.

It's been a while since the Liberals were looking out for the best interests of Ontario. Because of that, life has gotten harder in Ontario.

My question to the Premier is, does every decision this government makes need to be about their own political survival?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We'll talk about the initiatives that we are involved in, and that includes investing billions of dollars in infrastructure across this province. We're in year three of a \$160-billion investment, over 12 years, in infrastructure. That's roads, bridges, transit, hospitals, schools and universities.

We are in the process of putting in place a climate change policy, a cap-and-trade system that is going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We only have to look around the world to recognize that climate change is the single most important threat that we are facing as a globe—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now that I've got quiet to make sure that I don't have to be too loud, the member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

You have one wrap-up sentence.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are investing in the post-secondary education of the young people of this province in a way that has not been done before.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: Last week, we learned of the fifth OPP investigation into the Liberal government. This time, the government is accused of deleting key evidence in a \$500-million lawsuit. The Premier claimed that she knew nothing about it until the media reported it. But Trillium's lawyer, Morris Cooper, doubts that could be possible. He's quoted in an article in the Ottawa Citizen by David Reevely that he spoke to the government lawyers about it several times.

Speaker, we're not talking about a nuisance lawsuit here. We're talking about a lawsuit that has the taxpayers at risk for half a billion dollars. Will the Premier admit to the Legislature that she was aware of it, or is the normal way of doing business in her government just deletions, denials and cover-ups?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. The member will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have been very clear that I knew nothing about the investigation until I read about it in the media. The Attorney General has sent a statement to the Ottawa Citizen. If the member opposite has further questions, we can absolutely make sure that he gets a copy of that statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: At a half a billion dollars, she should have known about it.

Thanks to David Livingston and Laura Miller, we now know that all evidence in the Premier's office and cabinet

office about the Trillium project was wiped away. What about the other ministries—energy and environment? According to the Trillium lawsuit, in January 2011, just two weeks before the offshore wind program was cancelled, the government decided to give the offshore wind file a code name. It's no surprise, Mr. Speaker, since they called the gas plant file Project Vapour.

What's shocking is that this government gave orders to “purge all emails, records and documents except for Ohio and Sweden.”

Will the Premier tell us what code name was assigned to the offshore wind file, and will she release all the documents saved under that code name?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, I knew nothing about this investigation until I read about it in the media. It is an investigation that is taking place outside of this Legislature, as it rightly should.

I will read from the statement that was sent to the media last week by the Attorney General: “The only information we have is what we have read in the media and if what we have read is accurate, you should address any questions you have to either the OPP, who have been quoted as saying they are investigating this matter, or to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada (PPSC), whose counsel has been quoted as saying they have not received any disclosure on this.”

Mr. Speaker, I would advise the same to the member opposite and I would then again refer back to my earlier answer, which is, we have instituted training. We have instituted changes in terms of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, but you wrote the code names.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nipissing, second time.

1050

Mr. John Yakabuski: Dodge, deflect, deny, delete—oh, sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Being sorry is not really meaningful if you continue to do it.

New question.

NURSES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. More than 1,440 nurses have been fired since January 2015. With those kinds of cuts, it's no wonder that health care is the silent crisis of this government.

This morning, I stood with nurses from Toronto to call for an immediate moratorium to nursing cuts in Ontario. On the first day of Nursing Week, will the Premier agree to stop firing nurses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to comment.

I want to acknowledge the nurses and nursing students who are here today. Nurses obviously play an essential role in our health care system. What the leader of the third party doesn't talk about is the nurses, who have been hired, because there are two sides to this equation.

There are more than 26,000 more nurses in our system than there were in 2003, and that includes 11,000 registered nurses. I know there has been a distinction made between different kinds of nurses. The reality is, there are more nurses now in our system, whether they're registered or whether they are RPNs, than there were in 2003. There's a clear trend line in terms of an increase in nurses in the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The trend line is 1,440 nurses fired since January of last year.

People across Ontario know that nurses are there to care for them—nurses like the ones from Windsor who have made the long drive to Queen's Park to be in the gallery this morning. When people are at their most vulnerable, Speaker, they count on nurses to be there for them.

After four years where hospitals didn't receive a single increase, and now with increases failing to match inflation or a growing population, hospitals are being cut yet again. For the last 16 months, that meant 90 nurses a month—three nurses a day—being fired, over 1,400 of them since the start of 2015 alone.

Will this Premier agree that no more nurses in Ontario should be fired?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I also want to thank our nurses who are here, our RNs, and also welcome the RNAO report that came out this morning, which provides us with exceptional guidance on the way forward and how we need to look at the nursing mix and the contribution that our nurses make across this province.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to set the record straight, because we can't look at gross changes like the third party wants to do; we need to look at the net changes of nurses in this province. In every single category of nurses, whether it's RNs, RPNs or nurse practitioners, we've seen, since 2003, an increase to date of every single—whether you measure it on a per capita basis or the absolute number of nurses, there are more nurses—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Eric Hoskins:—every category working in this province since 2003, and that continues today. I'm exceptionally proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The way you thank nurses is certainly not to fire them. It's actually to make sure that they can keep their jobs. That's how you thank them.

The minister can talk about 2003 all he wants. I'm talking about what's happened in the last 16 months in this province, and that is 1,440 nurses fired by this government.

After four years of cuts, if anything, Ontario doesn't—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. The member from Durham, come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's not even in his seat, Speaker. He's not in his seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought you apologized.

Leader?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, after four years of cuts, if anything, Ontario doesn't have enough nurses. There's an old saying that if you find yourself in a hole, the first thing you do is stop digging.

Patients have watched as nurses have been fired across Ontario. But let's be clear: Fewer nurses doesn't improve health care for people; it hurts patient care. Will the Premier instruct her minister to issue a directive today to stop firing nurses in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I implore the leader of the third party to begin talking about the whole change in the nursing sector. There are from time to time nurses who, because of a variety of reasons where the jobs are lost—but other nurses are hired. She doesn't have to believe me—and I would ask all nurses who are listening to this, and others concerned, to look at the College of Nurses of Ontario. It's all there for everybody to see. You'll see, in the past year, that there were 2,799 additional nursing positions across all nursing categories. In the last four years, from 2011 to 2015, there were net increases in nursing positions in our hospitals. The majority of those new hires, those net increases, were RNs.

NURSES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My second question is also for the Premier. As I mentioned, nurses from Windsor are joining us here today. Under the Premier's watch, Windsor Regional Hospital is grappling with a \$20-million budget shortfall.

In January, the hospital announced that 166 jobs would be cut. Now, in fact, we know that 169 registered nurses' positions will be eliminated.

Will the Premier make that basic commitment today to stop forcing hospitals, like Windsor regional, to cut front-line nursing positions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just go back to what the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care just said, which is that between 2011 and 2015, the reality is that most net new nursing positions in the hospital sector were filled by registered nurses, which I know is one of the issues that the leader of the third party has been concerned about.

Mr. Speaker, we heard hospitals' concerns about the fact that they hadn't seen increases. That's why there's 345 million new dollars going into hospital funding as a result of our budget. That's in the context of a billion dollars of new funding going into the health care system. We understand that there was a need for that, and we look forward to continuing to work with our hospitals, as

they work with all of the community providers, and as we transform the health care system so that it meets the needs of the people in this province today and into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Liberals have been cutting hospitals to the bone and they've been doing that for years and years: 1,440 nursing positions have been cut over the past 16 months; hospitals across this province are making deep cuts to nursing care to respond to the cuts that the Liberals are making to their budgets.

Since January, hospitals in Kitchener, Hamilton, Ottawa, Toronto and Windsor have all been forced by this Premier and this government to cut nurses. Let's be perfectly clear: We cannot afford to lay off another nurse in this province. Whether you're a registered nurse, a registered practical nurse or a nurse practitioner, no more nurses should be handed a pink slip in this province.

Will the Premier do the right thing and issue a directive that no more nurses will be fired in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, we need to talk about net changes, because as programs disappear, even as nurses move from one part of the hospital to another part of the hospital, necessarily layoffs have to occur. But in many, if not most cases, those individuals are rehired. In the case of Windsor, they are undergoing a skill mix review and some changes. Windsor is one of the very few hospitals remaining in Ontario that has a 100% RN workforce.

I just don't subscribe to the view of the leader of the third party that our RPNs, our registered practical nurses, have no value or have no value in our hospitals. I don't subscribe to that view. I believe that sometimes there is a role and it's up to the hospital administrations, based on good evidence and directing their administrations to focus on the quality of care and outcomes, that that skill mix needs to be determined.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Instead of throwing mud, this minister should look at the thousands of petitions that are going to be tabled in this House today, because he is firing nurses; the hospitals are firing nurses. That's why they're here on Nursing Week, Speaker, to say, "stop firing the nurses in this province."

For Ontarians, the health of their family is their number one concern, and so it should be, but it should also be the number one concern of this Premier. Ontarians deserve a government that is committed to making sure that the health care system is there for them when they need it. But that's impossible when the government keeps firing nurses.

Why won't this Premier and her Minister of Health face up to the silent crisis that they are creating in the health care system and put a stop to nursing cuts right here and right now?

1100

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, for the member opposite, the leader of the third party, to somehow suggest that we are doing the opposite of what we are doing—we have increased the number of RNs in this province in the last decade by 11,000.

But you need to look at the net changes. You need to look at the net changes. For example, when the NDP were in power—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, Minister, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: When the NDP were in power, the net change, from beginning to end of their relatively short period of time in government—3,000 registered nursing positions were lost. The percentage of nurses that were working full-time was reduced under the NDP. We've done the opposite. However you want to measure it, I'm proud of that record. It's worth it: investing in our nurses, the front line. They do the most important work—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Thank you.

New question.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to Premier. When it comes to remaining silent on workplace harassment, the government's ad campaign says, "It's never okay." In last Friday's Niagara Falls Review, we now learn that a former female employee of Kim Craiton said she was bound by a non-disclosure agreement. When asked about the harassment allegations made against Craiton, she said, "I just can't say any more about this."

Can the Premier tell us: Was the non-disclosure agreement tied to the settlement of the sexual harassment complaint, or are these women free to come forward to tell their stories?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite knows, one of the women did come forward and talk to the media, which is why I then made a statement.

I have made tackling the issue of sexual violence and harassment a priority. When I have been faced with an issue of sexual harassment, I've led by example. I made a statement on Friday: If a sexual harassment complaint is made against a Liberal MPP, an independent investigation is undertaken, and if that independent investigation determines that serious misconduct has occurred, then that MPP will no longer serve in my caucus.

In that process, there are confidentiality issues that arise. I was not prepared, until one of the women had

come forward, to breach that confidentiality. I would think that the member opposite would understand—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before you do—stop the clock—I believe I heard something very unparliamentary, but I could not assign the person. I hope it doesn't happen again.

Please finish.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Back to the Premier: I would be shocked if the Premier's office were found to have muzzled victims of sexual harassment, but the media does beg the question.

It looks like the silence that the Premier has obtained is not meant to protect victims; it's meant to protect the Premier. If I'm wrong, then Michelle Tavano and all the other victims would be free to tell their stories.

It is a sad day for women in this province to learn that the Premier will do anything to save her own political career. So Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Deputy House leader, second time. Come to order.

Please finish.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to silencing the voices of victims, why is it never okay, except when you're the Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just say that if the member opposite thinks that requiring that an MPP being removed from office protects me and protects my party, then she doesn't understand how politics works.

It is the complainant and the victim's choice whether they retain confidentiality, Mr. Speaker. Again, I would say to the member opposite that I would think she would understand that in order to create an environment where people feel free to come forward, they need to know that their complaint will be confidential. Quite frankly, I would say that there has not been an environment in our culture that would promote the coming forward by people who have been sexually assaulted or sexually harassed. It is my responsibility to create an environment so that more people will come forward, and confidentiality and the respect for confidentiality are part of that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. On Friday, the Premier revealed that she asked former MPP Kim Craitor to resign because of allegations of sexual harassment. In response, Craitor said, "I do know that the party paid them"—meaning the victims—"to keep the allegations quiet, and had them sign a non-disclosure agreement not to talk."

A former staffer in the MPP's office has confirmed that she was bound by non-disclosure. Women should not be forced to go public with allegations of sexual harassment but they should not be muzzled either.

Did the Premier require the complainant to sign a non-disclosure agreement, and did she pay her to keep quiet about the allegations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have to say I am really surprised by both of these questions. I really think that these questions demean—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, I do. I think that they demean the experience of women who make complaints.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Someone is tiptoeing around a request that I've made many times about using names. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When a complainant suggests that a confidentiality agreement be part of a resolution, then of course we agree to that, Mr. Speaker. I respect—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, that was their suggestion?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I respect that right of victims to ask for confidentiality, Mr. Speaker. I spoke out on Friday because one of the women in this particular case—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —came forward and spoke to the media. That is why I made the statement that I did. But, otherwise, I was respecting the agreement of confidentiality that was in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: An editorial today rightly points out that secrecy about sexual violence and harassment does not serve the public good. Rather, it signals to victims that there's something to be ashamed of. Requiring victims to keep quiet, making them sign non-disclosure agreements and paying them for their silence does nothing to help survivors heal. Instead, it often protects perpetrators, and in this case it prevents embarrassment to the Liberal Party.

Again to the Premier: Were victims paid to keep quiet about allegations of sexual—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Minister of Education, second time. Member from Durham, second time.

Please finish.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: If so, who ordered the payoffs and where did the money come from?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The confidentiality agreements that were in place were mutually agreed upon. I'm going to read from our policy because I don't know whether the opposition parties have workplace discrimin-

ation and harassment prevention policies that they operate by, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to read from ours. The section on confidentiality says, "This policy recognizes that it can be difficult for a complainant to bring forward a concern of discrimination or harassment. Individuals making a complaint of discrimination or harassment are assured during that investigation and consideration of a complaint and following its resolution all information relating to the complaint will remain confidential. However, both complainants and respondents must have access to sufficient information about the allegations and responses of other parties and witnesses to allow for a fair and effective participation in the resolution process."

That's the process that we followed, and I am not prepared to breach the confidentiality of victims and re-victimize them.

Interjections.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Start the clock.

New question?

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Mr. Han Dong: My question is for the Minister of Education—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. If it happens again when I sit down, I'll deal with the individual.

The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Speaker.

My question is for Minister of Education. Investing in our youngest learners has always been a priority of our government. In the 2014 Ontario budget, the province made a commitment to invest \$750 million over four years to support school capital projects that reduce excess space.

Last year, the province announced \$120 million over three years in new funding dedicated to building safe, high-quality licensed child care spaces in our schools across the province.

Minister, last Friday you made an announcement about funding for new projects under these programs. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she tell this House about the new and renovated school infrastructure announced last week?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to thank the member for Trinity-Spadina for the question. Every year, Ontario funds local school infrastructure projects to provide students with better places to learn and give young children and their families increased access to safe, high-quality licensed child care in schools.

Over the past few weeks, I've had the pleasure of visiting various communities in Ontario and making capital announcements. On Friday, we did the wrap-up and announced that this year Ontario is investing \$137 million to build new schools, expand or renovate existing schools and create new child care spaces across the prov-

ince. This year, that adds up to 20 such projects including four new schools and 16 additions and retrofits.

Additionally, families in Toronto, Kingsville and Oshawa will benefit through the construction of 19 new, custom-built child care—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: Minister, it's great to hear that our government continues to improve learning environments for our students. We know that schools are hubs for our communities. They are spaces where children gather to learn and play and for programs that benefit children, families and communities. I know students and parents in my riding of Trinity-Spadina are excited to have the funding approved for St. Raymond Catholic School and an addition added to St. Luke Catholic School.

Minister, can you tell us how a project qualifies for capital funding under this program?

Hon. Liz Sandals: These projects are actually part of the largest investment in public infrastructure in the province's history—about \$160 billion over 12 years. That will support 110,000 jobs every year across the province with projects such as roads, bridges, transit systems, schools and hospitals.

In terms of qualifying for the funding, we consider funding projects under the School Consolidation Capital program that allow a board to reduce their excess capacity. Projects need to generate sufficient savings to warrant the investment in new space or renovated space and, where required, need to have completed the corresponding accommodation review.

Our government is very proud to invest in these capital projects that bring students and communities together and provide better buildings.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: To the Minister of Government and Consumer Services: The minister, like his colleagues, has an obligation to ensure in-person services at ServiceOntario outlets are there for Ontarians who need them. Instead, he plans to close nine ServiceOntario outlets, forcing residents in my riding and other rural communities to drive long distances to get the services their tax dollars pay for.

The minister doesn't appear to be making any attempt to guarantee in-person interaction in local communities. Decisions over planning, agriculture, energy and others have left small-town rural Ontario behind. Is this just the latest cut, just another scheme to make Ontarians pay for your government's mismanagement?

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite and obviously understand his concern. This is a very important issue, as ServiceOntario conducts about 50 million transactions each year, Speaker.

We are proposing to continue to maintain 277 offices across the province. The one the individual is referring to, in fact, has one staff person in it, and there are a number of alternative locations. We wanted to make sure that customers in Ontario and all Ontarians would have

good quality service. In fact, customer satisfaction surveys indicate about 98% are very satisfied with the service.

We are also moving more services online, Speaker. More than 40 services are online right now and we continue to see an increase in that area.

I'm happy to add more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim McDonell: While he may want to cut costs, the minister has no excuse for cutting in-person services for Ontarians who can't and shouldn't be expected to drive to another county to get the service.

The Auditor General warned that the interest on this government's reckless debt will crowd out public services. Is this what the Auditor General warned us about, or will the minister commit to preserving its existing in-person public services in rural Ontario?

Hon. David Orazietti: There obviously continue to be services in rural Ontario and these areas. This was a very thoughtful approach. I know it's difficult, but it was one that was evaluated and analyzed for well over a year to determine how we could modernize and make more efficient the services delivered through our ministry. We continue to take a responsible approach in this regard.

Guiding principles in these decisions were preserving the quality of customer service and ensuring that the capacity could be absorbed in surrounding areas that are no more than 28 kilometres away in every location. Those top three services—driver's licence renewal, val tag stickers and health cards—will continue to be available in all of these surrounding locations.

This is, I know, a difficult decision that we've had to make in our ministry. It's part of our modernization for ServiceOntario, and we continue to see more services online.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Instead of fixing Hydro One so that it delivers affordable, secure and green power for all Ontarians, this government has prioritized making money for shareholders, while at the same time driving up rates for customers.

Last Friday, it was announced that Hydro One shareholders will be paid more than \$36 million in dividends. On May 1, electricity prices in the province went up yet again. This is the eighth time in a row that rates have gone up by more than 9% over the previous year.

Speaker, my question is simple: When will this government start putting the interests of Ontarians first?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I think the member opposite fails to recognize that the majority of that dividend is for the people of Ontario, for the taxpayers. We're the major shareholder, Mr. Speaker. As a result of the improvements that we've made to this corporation, it now operates more effectively, the dividends are increasing and, contrary to what the member actually stated earlier, this deal is in fact better for the people of Ontario, better for the ratepayers in the end, as we reinvest where necessary.

At the same time, we're reinvesting in new infrastructure that wouldn't otherwise be available to us. They denied that opportunity, Mr. Speaker. We will not. We're helping the people of Ontario and we're investing to make it even better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ontarians don't need to be convinced that this government is mismanaging the electricity file. Some 85% of Ontarians want the province to stop the sell-off of Hydro One—85%.

The Financial Accountability Officer says that the sell-off of Hydro One will make Ontario worse off by half a billion dollars a year, every year. Businesses say that sky-high electricity prices are damping down growth in this province, and the OPP is once again—once again, Speaker—investigating the government for deleted documents over the cancellation of a multi-million-dollar energy contract.

Speaker, when will this government stop making Ontarians pay the price for its short-sighted and self-serving actions?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Further to the Minister of Finance's answer, what I think the member fails to realize is that, of the proceeds that came from the IPO, \$5 billion goes towards reducing the province's debt. We are reducing our interest payments already by \$100 million a year as a result of this transaction. So not only are we getting investments for infrastructure in the Trillium Trust, we're also bettering our fiscal position by reducing the interest we pay on our debt by \$100 million a year. As we do the next tranches, the reduction in interest payments will be higher. So we're very, very happy with a better-run company.

1120

We are also providing many mitigating programs for people, including tax deductions, which represent—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Last week, we recognized Children's Mental Health Week in Ontario. Now, more than ever, the well-being of the indigenous children, youth and families is in the spotlight. Indigenous communities in Ontario face challenges in accessing supports for mental health, child welfare, specialized services and youth justice.

I understand that our government is working with First Nation, Métis, Inuit and urban indigenous partners to develop a strategy to support indigenous children and youth in Ontario.

Through you to the minister, Speaker: Would the minister please tell us how our government is engaging with indigenous partners in the development of this strategy?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, our government is committed to helping First Nation, Métis, Inuit and urban

indigenous children in Ontario get the best possible start in life. That's why the work that we are doing together with the First Nation partners on the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy is now more urgent than ever.

In fact, last week, during Children's Mental Health Week, I had the pleasure of joining the Minister of Children and Youth Services for a very important round table with First Nation leaders from across Ontario, including First Nation youth. We heard from First Nation leaders and youth about the tragedies, the challenges and the solutions to these issues.

The involvement of First Nation leaders and youth is the key to the development of our strategy. It ensures that they have a voice in the development of community-driven, integrated and culturally appropriate supports for First Nation youth and their families here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Minister, for that response.

My supplementary question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. It's great to hear about the hard work that the ministers are doing to improve outcomes for indigenous children and youth in Ontario. I would like to thank both ministers for their leadership in bringing First Nations leaders to discuss how we can work together to develop solutions to these important issues.

I understand that the work our government is doing to address jurisdiction over child care is just one part of the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy. Can the Minister of Children and Youth Services tell us more about the significance of last week's round table meeting with First Nations leaders?

Hon. David Zimmer: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Barrie for this very important question. Last week's round table did highlight the many ways we're working across our government to improve the mental health and well-being of First Nations children, youth and their families.

One of the topics we talked about was the need for a critical path forward on advancing jurisdiction on child welfare, which our government is committed to, working with our partners and the federal government on this. Honouring First Nations' jurisdiction over the well-being of children is a vital step going forward in this process. That's why jurisdiction over child care is one of the pillars of our government's Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy.

It's also why we will also be engaging with Métis, urban indigenous and Inuit partners to develop solutions to the unique challenges that they, too, face in addressing issues surrounding child welfare.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. The former employee of Kim Craiton told the media, "I just

can't say any more about this." The Premier said she disclosed Kim Craiton's name because this woman came forward.

Will the Premier set aside the non-disclosure agreement and allow Michelle Tavano to tell her story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, as I said, the woman came forward, and she is free to talk and to tell her story as she sees fit. Confidentiality agreements that are in place are mutual, Mr. Speaker. I am not prepared to breach a confidentiality agreement.

I'm trying to create an environment where people feel free to come forward and where, when they tell me or they tell someone in our government or they undergo an investigation and they are assured of confidentiality, that confidentiality is kept in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's clear that Michelle Tavano wants to tell her story. I'm sure the Premier would encourage all women who want to speak to tell their stories. Is Michelle Tavano free to tell her story without fear of being sued or having to pay the money back?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, the—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just answer the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Interjection: Third time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need any other armchair quarterbacks, either.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My first concern is for the victims in these situations.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hear the heckling from the other side, but it's actually quite the contrary. My concern is for the victims. My concern is for the people whose lives have been so negatively affected by these situations. It is up to the victims. It is up to them what they choose to talk about publicly or not.

Mr. Speaker, I will always respect the confidentiality of the victims. I will not engage in a process that will revictimize them. I would have thought that the member opposite would have felt the same—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Lanark, come to order—second time.

New question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. On Sunday, an editorial was published telling the Premier that the way she's reducing the wait-list for autism therapy is "all wrong." This decision has left parents devastated. Hopes for their children have been crushed. The editorial argues that kids already on the wait-list and in the program should get the treatment they need and they were promised because it's the right thing to do and the fair thing to do. I believe the Premier knows it. Capping treatment based on age is not only wrong, but

it's discriminatory, as former Liberal Premier McGuinty once said.

Will the Premier do the right thing and immediately remove the age cap for children receiving access to intensive behavioural therapy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Children and Youth Services is going to want to comment.

I had the opportunity, when I was in Ottawa last week, to meet with members from the Alliance Against the Ontario Autism Program, which is one of the groups that has been talking to us over the last number of days. I had an opportunity to talk about how this change is intended and is being implemented in order to get children—whether they just started getting service or whether they've been sitting on a waiting list for years and haven't had any service, to get them the right intensity of service, to move them into service right away. That is the whole point of this, because it is unconscionable that we would keep kids on a waiting list and not getting service when we have the opportunity to move them into the right level, get them an assessment and help them through that transition so they'll get a tailor-made program for themselves.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, this Premier is moving them from one list onto another. That's what's unconscionable. It's not just parents who are concerned; it's experts, too. The school boards are wondering how they will support an influx of autistic kids who haven't received therapy. As the editorial states, "To suddenly strip children and families of the hope to which they have clung, sometimes for years, is too cruel a way to save money...." Speaker, I agree. It's cruel to try to balance the books on the backs of kids with ASD.

Another article about autism changes says that in this Premier's Ontario, it "has become abundantly clear some ... special interests are far more important than others."

1130

Will the Premier finally admit that she got this one wrong? Will she remove the age cap from children with ASD receiving evidence-based, intensive therapy immediately?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Well, from the same articles I've read, from talking to groups and experts and parent groups, there is a lot of agreement. There is agreement that \$333 million is a wonderful, historic investment. There is agreement that the 16,000 new spaces for children with ASD are very important.

It's very important—and I encourage, again, the opposition to be very clear on what they're saying, because we are not removing children from the IBI wait-list into nothing. They are currently, unfortunately, not getting service and they will get service immediately with the payment of the \$8,000.

As for schools, the Minister of Education is very actively engaged on this file. We already have children

with ASD in schools and we have programs and services to support them.

Is there more to do? Yes. In fact, I'm meeting with the minister tomorrow.

POVERTY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. I know that the Local Poverty Reduction Fund, or LPRF, is an important component of our government's renewed Poverty Reduction Strategy. The LPRF funds community organizations providing innovative and local solutions to poverty in their area.

I read in the budget that last year, the LPRF funded an impressive 41 projects in 20 communities across our province, meaning that hundreds of lives are being impacted with locally based solutions—an exciting number to see.

However, I wanted to know more about the projects that were supported through the LPRF. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you tell us more about the Local Poverty Reduction Fund and what kinds of initiatives were supported through the first round of funding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for Burlington for the question and her ongoing commitment to this issue.

The Local Poverty Reduction Fund invests in initiatives that help break the cycle of poverty for children and youth, increase employment and end homelessness in Ontario.

One such great example is Up With Women. Up With Women is one of the organizations that received a grant from the first round of local poverty reduction funding. They're here today and they starred in the national news last night. They're all about helping recently homeless and at-risk women build sustainable, empowering careers with the goal of helping them permanently exit poverty.

Today they've joined us. We celebrate them. I celebrate them on Mother's Day. Since working with Up With Women, these moms have been able to access supports and transition—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to thank the minister for her answer. I'm delighted to hear that Ontario is investing in front-line community organizations like Up With Women—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I would also like to welcome our guests here today. We applaud you for all of the challenging things that you've done and for the exciting work you're doing now. We are so pleased to welcome you to Queen's Park.

I'm also very pleased to hear that the first round of funding for the LPRF has distributed funding to such valuable programs. But I know too that the fund is a six-year, \$50-million total investment. There is definitely more to come.

Minister, I know that all members of this House are interested in the fund's potential for their communities, so could you please share with us when the next round of funding will be available and how interested organizations can apply?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Information on the second round of the local poverty reduction funding is available on the Ontario Trillium Foundation website and on ontario.ca/povertyreduction. We'll be accepting proposals until early June.

For this year's round of funding, we're dedicating up to \$10 million total targeted for projects related to homelessness. The dedicated funding will help reach this government's bold goal of ending chronic homelessness in 10 years.

We've also dedicated at least \$2 million in this round to support projects in indigenous communities and by indigenous-led organizations. I want to say thank you to my parliamentary assistant, the member from Newmarket-Aurora, for his work in engaging with a variety of indigenous leaders and community members on how to make the application process more accessible and ensure that the program is more responsive to indigenous communities.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. The minister's office was informed that her seamless rollout of SAMS was flawed from the get-go, but she plowed ahead anyway. She inflicted chaos on the system, chaos that came with a hefty price tag of almost \$300 million. Now municipalities and service providers have been left to foot the bill for significant overtime costs, extra staff to handle the problems with SAMS and, in some cases, even new equipment in order to run SAMS.

Municipalities are not responsible for paying for this government's mistakes. Will this minister finally take responsibility for the SAMS disaster and reimburse municipalities for their expenses?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As I've said many times in this House, we do acknowledge that the rollout of SAMS posed many, many challenges for front-line staff. I want to take the opportunity yet again—and I met some just last Friday, actually, in terms of the challenges that they faced and they worked very diligently through those challenges. Of course, as the member has alluded to, I was given assurances that, in fact, we would not be facing those types of challenges.

However, as he is referencing assistance to municipalities: To date, we have helped municipalities with an additional payment of some \$15 million to assist them through the transition, and I know that this has made a great deal of difference to those municipalities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The money that the government has already provided comes nowhere close to

meeting the need. Brantford and Brant county require \$600,000 to cover the problematic rollout of SAMS. Ottawa has estimated they need \$4 million. In Waterloo region, the costs add up to more than \$1 million. Hamilton needs at least \$820,000. Stratford passed a resolution calling for a permanent fix to SAMS, as they estimate they spent \$175,000 in the months after SAMS release. And the list just keeps going. It has come to the point where legal action is being considered to recoup these expenses.

Will the minister do the right thing and reimburse municipalities and their taxpayers, or is she going to add millions in legal fees to the massive SAMS bill?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, we've been having ongoing discussions and conversations with municipalities, including the ones that the member referenced. I'm in ongoing discussion with those particular locations and the dialogue continues.

Apart from the \$15 million that I referenced earlier, we are looking very specifically at those centres. If they have some additional costs, I know that I and my officials are very open to looking at their particular concerns. In fact, it was the city of Brantford where I visited early on, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to talk to front-line workers in that city. They did have some particular difficulties that were unique to their location. The conversations will definitely continue and we will try and see what we can do to mitigate their concerns as we go forward.

Just one last piece: I think we all remember that the SDMT situation introduced by that party cost—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question?

HURONIA REGIONAL CENTRE FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. In December 2013, the Premier apologized to the survivors of Huronia and said, "We will protect the memory of all those who have suffered, help to tell their stories, and ensure that the lessons of this time are not lost."

Yet in discussions on the future of Huronia, the survivors have been left out. The Premier's apology is empty words if the survivors of Huronia are not part of these discussions. How can the survivors expect to be consulted about the future of the Huronia property when last fall the government did an investigation of the sewage pipes of the institution's cemetery and didn't share the results with the survivors?

I've had several conversations with the Minister of Economic Development and received no answers. They want to know if any bodies were disturbed in the cemetery. Will the Premier commit to honouring the survivors and engage with them in discussions about the future of Huronia?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I had the opportunity to express to her last week that I'm very concerned that we

do work with the survivors as any changes are made to this site. I think it's a wonderful site. I visited it very early on when I was an MPP because I had constituents whose children had been there from the time they were two years old—and they were 50-year-old men when I visited them. So it was a very poignant visit that I made. That impressed upon me how important it is that, as we go forward, whatever happens with this site, we are very sensitive to the grounds and we're very sensitive to the usage going forward.

We commit to working with the survivors. I know that there is a more involved discussion going on with people in the community who have ideas for how they'd like to see the site used in the future.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to introduce in the members' gallery Asphandiar—who is better known as Aspi—Wadiwalla, Jimmy Yu, Julia Cosby, Amira Hashaby, Sheref Sabawy and Daniela Chivu. Welcome and bienvenue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member from Ottawa Centre and the minister of public safety and corrections, I'd like to introduce in the gallery Mattias Falkner, Caroline Falkner and Beth Martin, who are here to watch page Benjamin Falkner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to take this opportunity to wish my wife, Dianne, a happy anniversary for putting up with me for 39 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Newmarket–Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to welcome constituent Damien Walsh, father of page Leah Walsh, to Queen's Park today.

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION
PLAN ACT (STRENGTHENING
RETIREMENT SECURITY
FOR ONTARIANS), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE RÉGIME
DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE
DE L'ONTARIO (SÉCURISER LA RETRAITE
EN ONTARIO)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 186, An Act to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 186, Loi établissant le Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On April 20, 2016, Mr. Bradley moved second reading of Bill 186.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Paul
Baker, Yvan	Hatfield, Percy	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Horwath, Andrea	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Natyshak, Taras
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Oraziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Sattler, Peggy
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Tabuns, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
DiNovo, Cheri	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Dong, Han	Martins, Cristina	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Fraser, John	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
French, Jennifer B.	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David
Gates, Wayne	McMeekin, Ted	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakubski, John
Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 68; the nays are 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 5, 2016, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Please join me in welcoming members of the Sikh Motorcycle Club of Ontario and

their supporters. We have Manohar Singh Bal, Kanwaljit Kaur Singh, Jasbir Singh Saini, Varinder Kaur, Sawarn Singh, Bhupinder Kaur, Rampal Singh Dhillon, Gurmeet Singh Grewal, Bhupinder Singh, Sandeep Singh, Parvinder Singh, Jasbir Singh Hundal, Inderjit Singh Jagraon, Lakhvinder Singh, Bikram Singh Bal, and Jagdeep Singh.

And no, all these Singhs aren't related to me directly, but they are my family by association. Please join me in welcoming them all to the assembly today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Further introductions?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I would like to welcome nurses from Windsor and Essex county today: Carol Ahpin, Karen Bertrand, Vicki McKenna, Jo-Dee Brown, Cheryl Colborne, Bruce Jewell, Sandy Kravets, Barb Marcolin, Barbara Porter, Veronika Pulley, Sherri Sherbo and Gwen Spencer-Giswein. They should be up in the gallery momentarily.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to rise to welcome members in the gallery who are here to honour the Battle of Monte Cassino.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome Monique Savage, Louise Decaen, Carmen Godin and Aline Savage. They're here to watch the introduction of a petition they worked very hard on.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would also like to welcome all of the members who are here on behalf of the Bramalea-Gore-Malton member. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BATTLE OF MONTE CASSINO

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I rise today to honour the heroes of the Battle of Monte Cassino. The Battle of Monte Cassino, also known as the Battle for Rome, was one of the most important campaigns of the Second World War. Marked by outstanding military achievement in appalling conditions, the battles of Monte Cassino opened the road to Rome and the beginning of the end for the German occupation of Italy.

On May 18, 1944, Allied forces, including Canadians and the Polish Corps led by General Wladyslaw Anders, pushed on to Monte Cassino and raised their flag over the 1,400-year-old Benedictine abbey.

In commemoration of this sacrifice, the Italian and Polish communities have come together to create a replica of the war memorial display from Monte Cassino Hill in Italy. The replica contains 12 panels, with photographs and writing in English, Polish and Italian, describing the victory by Allied forces, and will be featured this month at Toronto city hall, Parliament Hill and here at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Today, with veterans and members of the Italian and Polish communities who are here with us at Queen's

Park, we commemorate the heroes of the Battle of Monte Cassino for their immense bravery and sacrifice.

NURSES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise today, on behalf of my community of Windsor West, on the first day of Nursing Week in Ontario. Our dedicated and professional nurses are critical to delivering the quality health care that people living in this province know and deserve. Today, I'm joined by some of these caregivers from my riding, and I thank them for taking the time to come to Queen's Park.

While our front-line health care workers work hard every day to ensure our families stay healthy, the Liberal government's underfunding of hospitals continues to make their jobs more difficult. This year, Windsor Regional Hospital announced that 169 nursing positions will be eliminated. This is equivalent to the loss of 330,000 hours of hands-on RN patient care per year. Aspiring nurses may be forced to seek out employment in the US, costing us our next generation of trained and dedicated caregivers in Ontario. These cuts will have a real impact on people in their most vulnerable moments.

Hospitals must not be forced to make decisions based on dollars and deficits. Nearly 10,000 caregivers, health care recipients and families in Windsor and Essex county signed a petition calling for an end to these short-sighted hospital cuts. Enough is enough. It's time for this government to listen.

New Democrats know nurses are vital to making sure families and seniors in Windsor and across Ontario get quality health care they can count on. It's time for this government to recognize the value of our nurses in delivering patient care and commit to a moratorium on nursing cuts.

BATTLE OF MONTE CASSINO

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Earlier today we gathered to remember one of the most important campaigns of the Second World War: the Battle of Monte Cassino. Many Allied troops perished—including some members of my family—or sustained injuries during this long and difficult military campaign.

On the final push for Monte Cassino, 923 brave heroes of the famed Polish II Corps lost their lives and thousands more were wounded. Polish visitors always lay red and white flowers at these heroes' final resting place, the Polish army cemetery at the top of Monte Cassino. The memorial's inscription reads:

"For our freedom and yours

"We soldiers of Poland

"Gave

"Our soul to God

"Our life to the soil of Italy

"Our hearts to Poland."

This is the 72nd anniversary of the Battle of Monte Cassino, and we were honoured to join the president of

the Canadian Polish Congress, Ms. Teresa Berezowski; the vice-president of the National Congress of Italian Canadians; the consul general of the Republic of Poland, Grzegorz Morawski; and the consul general of Italy, Giuseppe Pastorelli, to recognize their amazing work to create the display named “For Our Freedom and Yours” here at Queen’s Park. Today is made even more special as Polish President Andrzej Duda is visiting the GTA and our nation’s capital.

Today, let us remember and honour the sacrifices of the brave and patriotic men who served during this campaign, as well as our veterans and military personnel who uphold our democracy and our values.

ONTARIO SMALL URBAN MUNICIPALITIES CONFERENCE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Last week, the town of Goderich—known internationally as the prettiest town in Canada—hosted the 2016 Ontario Small Urban Municipalities conference. Running from May 4 to 6, this year’s theme was “Are You Prepared?” and featured speakers such as famed tornado hunter Greg Johnson. He was a big hit with the group in attendance in Goderich last week.

Also on hand was Gary McNamara, president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who highlighted some of the challenges facing our rural and small urban municipalities. Central to his message was the disconnect that seems to exist in the government here at Queen’s Park with respect to smaller municipalities. These municipalities don’t always have the resources that larger urban centres do in order to tackle the red tape surrounding projects such as grant applications, development funding or even lobbying.

He pointed to the fact that the government is currently more concerned with projects for cities and large urban centres, such as rapid transit. I would suggest, Speaker, that in smaller municipalities, bridges and roads are oftentimes the only lifeline available to build up local economies and they’re equally important.

Projects such as bridges can be costly—upwards of several million dollars—and raising the money to get matching federal and provincial funding is difficult with a smaller population. I’d like my colleagues on the other side of the House to keep that in mind when they are looking for new projects to invest in to “build Ontario up.”

Congratulations to the planning committee and Mayor Kevin Morrison, and I look forward to next year’s conference as well.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Families in Ontario face a child care crisis: too few spots, unaffordable rates and a huge financial burden on families. Because parents are desperate, they register on multiple child care lists in their

communities. Since they often have to pay to register, this becomes an additional burden on these families.

A number of parents in the east end of Toronto have come together to address this issue. At the beginning of April, the Minister of Education committed to changing regulations to protect parents from these fees and to ensure waiting lists are administered fairly. As of today, there has been no presentation, no public statement that in fact this change is coming forward.

Last week, I introduced a private member’s bill, at the request of the parents, to take on the issue. I urge the minister to bring forward regulations to actually deal with the waiting list expense and fairness issue. Failing that, my hope is that the government will take on this private member’s bill, take on this legislation, and move the issue forward. I think that families, children and the child care system deserve no less.

1310

LAKESHORTS INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I am pleased to rise today to speak to the House about the sixth annual Lakeshorts International Short Film Festival. Last Friday and Saturday nights, this event took place in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore at the Assembly Hall, where filmmakers, both local ones and from around the world, were invited to submit their wonderful short films.

This event, which has been organized for the last six years by Michelle Nolden and Chris Szarka—and the emcee is the renowned movie critic Richard Crouse—is a wonderful event that brings together filmmakers from around the world, and a great cultural event in my community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore that attracts people from across the GTA as well.

These wonderful filmmakers create stories that aren’t Hollywood blockbusters but are important short stories that tell us about the lives and cultures of people from around the world.

This wonderful event demonstrates the great cultural vibrancy in my community, in the city of Toronto and in Ontario. Ontario continues to be the number one film and TV production place in Canada and the third in North America. Events like this cement our standing internationally as one of the cities for film around the globe.

NURSES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I am proud to stand here today on behalf of the PC caucus and our leader, Patrick Brown, on the first day of National Nursing Week. National Nursing Week first came into being in 1985, when the second week of May was officially proclaimed National Nursing Week in Canada in an effort to recognize the dedication and achievements of the nursing profession.

This year’s theme is “Nurses: With You Every Step of the Way.”

Speaker, nurses do build strong connections with the people, families and communities they care for. Ontario is blessed with dedicated RNs, NPs and RPNs, all of whom work hard to do what's best for their patients.

Due to the ongoing mismanagement of the health care system from this government, though, our system is being rationed. We have seen years of frozen hospital budgets, which have led to many nurses being fired. RNs, NPs and RPNs all have a role to be played in our health care system. Their role should be based on an expanded scope of practice, not on budget shortfalls due to the incompetence of this government.

I invite all MPPs to partake in RNAO's Take Your MPP to Work Day, a day that has been ongoing for the past 16 years.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the nurses across Ontario for their hard work and dedication to our patients. Our nurses go well beyond their duty, despite year after year, being forced to do more with less.

FIRE IN FORT McMURRAY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: We are all touched by the unfortunate devastation that unfolded in Fort McMurray over the past week. My heart goes out to those who have lost their homes and means of livelihood.

The pictures coming from the scene are scary and sad to watch. The plight of more than 80,000 people who fled is beyond imagination. The danger to the well-being of those on the front line, including brave firefighters, is clear.

Fortunately, Canadians are coming together to support their fellow Canadians. It is encouraging that the federal government is matching donations. Even a group of Syrian refugees in Calgary is raising funds to help their new friends.

I applaud the Ontario Sikhs and Gurdwara Council and the Ontario Gurdwara Committee for fundraising in support of the people of Fort McMurray.

I want to thank our Premier for her leadership in sending 100 firefighters from Ontario to assist.

Mr. Speaker, let's all pray for those who are caught in the grip of this natural disaster and open our hearts and wallets to help them in their time of dire need.

RUSSELL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY LADIES' NIGHT

Mr. Grant Crack: Last Friday, I had the distinct pleasure of being able to attend the Russell Agricultural Society's 13th annual Ladies' Night event, the sold-out "Evening in Paris" dinner and auction in my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Over the last 13 years, the Russell Agricultural Society Ladies' Night events have gone on to raise more than \$340,000 for a wide variety of charities doing amazing work, including but not limited to the Canadian Cancer Society, cystic fibrosis, juvenile diabetes, the

Make-A-Wish foundation, and ALS Canada. This year, over 500 individuals raised \$30,000 through silent and live auctions and donations for the Alzheimer Society/La Société Alzheimer.

Since 1983, the Alzheimer Society has been committed to raising awareness and moving forward with the goal of finding a cure as well as continuing the vital efforts of improving the quality of life for many Ontarians living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. I applaud the society for the great work that they do in our communities.

Additionally, this year's event helped raise funds for the victims of the Fort McMurray wildfire in order to help alleviate the burden of the ongoing tragedy in Alberta.

Today I am highlighting the invaluable charitable work done by the Russell Agricultural Society, as well as extending a very gracious thank you to the honoured guests and the many volunteers who selflessly donated their time and efforts to this event for a very important cause. It was a pleasure for me to participate again this year. I'd like to send out a special thanks to co-chairs Judy McFaul and Lynne Rochon and also to a good friend, Suzanne Perras Campbell, and their team for their outstanding dedication and service to their community.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (HELMET EXEMPTION FOR SIKH MOTORCYCLISTS), 2016 LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (EXEMPTION DE L'OBLIGATION DE PORT DU CASQUE POUR LES MOTOCYCLISTES SIKHS)

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 196, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to exempt Sikh motorcyclists from the requirement to wear a helmet / Projet de loi 196, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exempter les motocyclistes sikhs de l'obligation de porter un casque.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to welcome the Sikh Motorcycle Club of Ontario for their support on this.

Section 104 of the Highway Traffic Act requires that persons riding or operating a motorcycle or a motor-assisted bicycle on a highway must wear a helmet. This bill exempts members of the Sikh community who have unshorn hair and who habitually wear turbans from section 104. The exemption exists in the UK; it also exists in other provinces such as Manitoba and British

Columbia, which notably has a large Sikh population as well. This is a matter of freedom of expression, and I strongly support the adoption of this bill.

ALLERGY FRIENDLY
SCHOOLYARD ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 SUR LES COURS D'ÉCOLE
NON ALLERGISANTES

Mr. Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 197, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to the planting of allergenic plants on school premises / Projet de loi 197, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à la plantation de plantes allergènes dans les lieux scolaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: The bill amends the Education Act to require every district school board or school authority to ensure that no new allergenic plants are planted on school premises. A plant is considered allergenic if it meets the allergenicity requirements prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. David Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed. Minister.

Hon. David Zimmer: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 42 be waived. 1320

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the notice for ballot item 42 be waived. Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice with respect to the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed. Minister.

Hon. David Zimmer: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 60, the Standing Committee on Estimates consider the 2016-17 estimates of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs on May 17 and May 18, 2016; and

That the Standing Committee on Estimates resume consideration of the 2016-17 estimates of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on May 31, 2016; and

That, upon completion of consideration of the remaining 2016-17 estimates of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the committee shall resume consideration of the 2016-17 estimates of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves that, notwithstanding—

Hon. David Zimmer: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PROMPT PAYMENT

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a number of petitions entitled "Support Prompt Payment Legislation in Ontario." It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas delayed payments are a harmful practice in Ontario's construction industry;

"Whereas Ontario's trade contractors incur significant costs when payments are delayed from general contractors;

"Whereas cash flow risks have forced many contractors out of business and discouraged others from investing in capital or hiring new workers;

"Whereas payment delays have led trade contractors to hiring fewer apprentices, which will lead to fewer qualified tradespeople in the future;

"Whereas prompt payment legislation offers government the opportunity to provide stimulus to the economy without spending a dime;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Ontario Legislature to support Ontario's construction industry by adopting prompt payment legislation as a means to address the payment delay issues in Ontario."

I sign this petition and support it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition that's only from Windsor and Essex county, with nearly 10,000 signatures on it. Another 17,000 names have signed online. It's called "Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario’s ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

On behalf of myself, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the member from Essex, we fully support this petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition on a file I’ve been working very hard on with constituents and advocates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many parents and caregivers are being charged non-refundable fees to place their children on wait-lists for daycare centres;

“Whereas non-refundable daycare wait-list fees can range from tens to hundreds of dollars;

“Whereas due to the scarcity of quality daycare spaces, many parents and caregivers are forced to place their children on multiple wait-lists;

“Whereas non-refundable daycare wait-list fees impose a significant financial burden on parents and caregivers for the mere opportunity to access quality child care;

“Whereas daycare wait-lists are often administered in a non-transparent manner which creates the risk that they will be administered in an unfair and/or discriminatory manner;

“Whereas parents and caregivers in Ontario already face significant barriers accessing daycare due to high costs and limited numbers of daycare spaces;

“Whereas quality child care is a public good and not a commodity and the costs of child care should not operate on a supply-and-demand basis;

“Whereas there are currently no regulations in place to prevent daycares from charging parents and caregivers exploitative fees;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize that we have a responsibility to take action now, and support a requirement for transparent administration of daycare wait-lists and a ban on non-refundable daycare wait-list fees.”

I agree with this petition. I’ve been working hard to make it happen, notwithstanding the other member’s bill, and I sign my name to it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current government under Premier Kathleen Wynne is calling for the sale of up to 60% of Hydro One shares into private ownership; and

“Whereas the decision to sell the public utility was made without any public input and the deal will continue to be done in complete secrecy; and

“Whereas the loss of majority ownership in Hydro One will force ratepayers to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, such as higher rates; and

“Whereas electricity rates are already sky-high and hurting family budgets as well as businesses; and

“Whereas ratepayers will never again have independent investigations of consumer complaints, such as the Ontario Ombudsman’s damning report on failed billing; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario are the true owners of Hydro One and they do not believe the fire sale of Hydro One is in their best interest;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To protect Ontario ratepayers by stopping the sale of Hydro One.”

I fully support it, will affix my name and send it with page Aadil.

SPEED LIMITS

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here signed by over 2,000 people from a good part of northern Ontario, and it says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas driving at a high rate of speed has contributed to many fatal snowmobile accidents on lakes and rivers across Ontario; and

“Whereas the safety of individuals is put at risk when snowmobiles are driven at a high rate of speed on lakes, rivers and within close proximity to people, ice huts and other vehicles; and

“Whereas section 14 of the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act, RSO 1990, c. M.44 states:

“No person shall drive a motorized snow vehicle at a greater rate of speed than,

“(a) 20 kilometres per hour,

“(i) on a highway where the speed limit established pursuant to the Highway Traffic Act is 50 kilometres per hour or less, or

“(ii) in any public park or exhibition grounds; or

“(b) 50 kilometres per hour,

“(i) on any highway which is open to motor vehicle traffic, where the speed limit established pursuant to the Highway Traffic Act is greater than 50 kilometres per hour, or

“(ii) on a trail. RSO 1990, c. M.44, s. 14(1).”

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(a) That no person shall drive a motorized vehicle at a greater rate of speed than;

“(i) 20 km per hour within 200 feet of any person, ice hut or other vehicles

“(ii) 80 km per hour on a frozen waterways

“(iii) set speeding fine for driving in excess of 20 km/h when within 200 feet of person, ice hut or vehicle

“(iv) set speeding fine for driving in excess of 80 km/h on a frozen waterway.”

I'd like to submit this petition to the Legislature with page Leah.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to update Ontario fluoridation legislation.

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association...;

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation...;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament.”

1330

Mr. Speaker, I support this petition, affix my signature to it and hand it to page Benjamin.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition here from Traci Steadman, a registered nurse from my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

I agree with this, I'll affix my signature and send it down with Spencer to the table.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have close to a thousand names on this petition, and I'd like to thank Darlene Bailey from my riding for signing it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural ... and lower annualized gas prices;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Samantha to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, which was sent to me by some residents in southern Mississauga. It is entitled “Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation,” and it reads as follows:

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by

more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

"Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led ... to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament."

Speaker, I am pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it down with page Emma.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas repeated cuts to health care funding under the present government are having a negative impact on the residents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, including seniors, diabetics and those suffering from eye or cardiovascular conditions; and

"Whereas the heart rehabilitation program at the Seaway Valley Health Centre provided a valuable service for many residents; and

"Whereas it is in everyone's interest to help all Ontarians stay healthy and prevent the occurrence of acute and dangerous conditions, such as heart failure; and

"Whereas this interest is best served through adequate funding to programs that have proven their value;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take all necessary actions to restore the heart rehab program at the Seaway Valley Health Centre."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page William.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Wayne Gates: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I agree with the petition, and I'll sign my name to it and give it to Leah.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime.

"When public education about sexual violence and harassment is not prioritized, myths and attitudes informed by misogyny become prevalent. This promotes rape culture....

"Sexual violence and harassment survivors too often feel revictimized by the systems set in place to support them. The voices of survivors, in all their diversity, need to be amplified....

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment's final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change ... and address attrition rates within our justice system, including examining 'unfounded' cases, developing enhanced prosecution models and providing free legal advice for survivors."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it, and will give this to page Brendan.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 5, 2016, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements

en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this bill, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke had the floor, and I assume he wants to speak again.

I am pleased to recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, if I may, Speaker, and I thank you for that, I'm not prepared to relinquish it just yet. I have a few moments left on the clock, and I intend to use as much of that as possible.

When I left off, we were talking about the mess that we've already seen this government, through ministerial directives and political interference, cause in the energy sector. I was speaking, I believe—and the member for Toronto–Danforth was helping me, and I appreciate that—about the gas plant cancellation decisions that have cost Ontario over \$1 billion.

In Bill 135, we actually take the power that the minister has and expand upon that. Essentially, under schedule 2—changes to the Electricity Act—the minister has almost unfettered powers. It talks about a more consultative process, but at the end of the day it also puts in there that, well, he can talk to people but he also has the power to ignore everything they say. It's a perfect Liberal bill, perfectly in keeping with the philosophy of this Liberal government: Go around and talk to everybody—the Premier loves to talk about how she loves to consult and collaborate with people and sit together with people to discuss what is best for the people of Ontario, and at the end of the day pays no attention to anything that has been said. At the end of the day, it's the Liberal way or no way at all.

1340

Under Bill 135, the Minister of Energy—and I believe I said that he would be crowned as the emperor of energy under this bill. The member from Toronto–Danforth said that we'd be creating an energy czar, and I just didn't think that that actually gave him enough power. The “emperor of energy” would actually be more appropriate.

Look at some of the things that they're doing. The minister spoke about all of the wonderful things they're doing in the energy sector. Speaker, I think it's incumbent upon me, as the opposition energy critic, to perhaps disagree with him a little bit. He's going on about how everything they've done is so wonderful in the energy sector. Yet, when I go home in my riding—and I guarantee you, Speaker, when the Liberal members go home to their ridings, they're hearing the same thing. The difference is, when they come here, they have to check in to the Premier's office on the way in—there's a little corridor they go through—and they get the electronic muzzle. They can't say a thing against the Liberal government while they're here, but they know what they're hearing in their ridings about the energy sector and hydro rates. They know.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's all positive.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hear the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell say “all positive.” Well, I hope the folks up in GPR just heard that. He says that it's all positive, folks. I would implore you to write to your member about energy rates in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, because I hardly think they're all positive. You've got his email address; fill that box, ladies and gentlemen in TV land, particularly you people in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. The member just said that everything's hunky-dory in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, everybody's happy. If you're happy about energy rates in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, let him know. But if you're not happy, let him know that too.

One of the things that—and this is just too cute by half. I've got to believe that there's some influence here, not that I would ever accuse anybody of doing anything. If you're a Hydro One customer, which I am—most people in rural Ontario are. I love this part in the hydro bill now; I get so many calls about this. People are just livid when they read this on their hydro bill. They took away the clean energy benefit—10% right up on your hydro bills. They've gone up every time you turn around. They went up again on May 1—the fastest-rising rates in North America, the highest rates anywhere.

Mr. Bob Delaney: You're wrong.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member from Mississauga says that we're wrong. So one increase that might be higher than this specific increase—but there's nowhere in North America where energy rates have risen like they have in Ontario over the past few years, and the member knows that. If he wants to debate and dispute that, well, he'd be more than welcome to it. He likes to talk, but he never likes to talk about the facts.

Anyway, here we go: On your bill now—after they've raised it to the point that they're putting people into energy poverty—as of January, they took the debt retirement charge off the residential bills. But the debt retirement charge, for the purpose of calculating it on a residential bill, should have gone off in January 2012. It was paid by 2011. But this government continued to put it on people's bills because they were taking that money and spending it on their pet programs, or they had already spent the money and they had to keep extracting it from the pockets of energy ratepayers.

So you had paid, as a residential customer, the debt retirement charge. But now they have the gall, the unmitigated gall, to put this on your hydro bill—I'm looking at my own hydro bill, with the two little asterisks, and then: “Debt retirement charge exemption saved you” X number of dollars. So they are now saying that they took a charge off that I'd actually already paid for years ago, that I should have stopped paying for years ago, and now that they finally got around to taking it off, they're saving me money. They're saving me money by not charging me the debt retirement charge I'd already fully paid for years ago. They have the gall to put that on your hydro bill like they are doing you some kind of a favour.

Can you believe it? Even the banks haven't got that much gall. Even the banks haven't got that much gall as

the Minister of Energy does to have Hydro One, which is still 70% owned by the province—they've sold off 15% and then 15% of Hydro One. We're going to get into that if we have time. I'm sure the member for Toronto—Danforth—I don't think you folks are in favour of that sale, are you? God, that's just a disaster. It's going to be a bigger disaster when they stop getting the revenue from Hydro One. They're talking about the revenue from the sale of Hydro One like they've somehow struck gold in the California gold rush and they're all running into the saloon and buying everybody drinks because it's time to celebrate because it's never been better. But wait till the money stops coming in from Hydro One. Wait till the revenue stops coming in from Hydro One, and then you people—well, for God's sake, surely to goodness by the time that rolls around, somebody else will be in charge of the government of this province.

But all these people want to do—they're bound and determined that whatever they do, no matter how many mistakes they make—and I can't even count that high—they will do their level best to keep this one promise that by 2017-18 they are going to have a balanced budget, and it doesn't matter what they have to sell.

Well, last week, they just sold the Ontario Liquor Control Board—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Two hundred and sixty million dollars. It's going to be a fire sale for anything they've got out there because they just want the cash to stuff into the corner and be able to say, "Oh, look, we've tamed the deficit." But that's not how you tame a deficit. You tame a deficit by changing your spending patterns and balancing revenue and expenses, not one-time revenue that can never repeat itself.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: When you sell that property this year, I say to the member from Barrie, who must be a financial wizard because she seems to think she's got all the answers—when you sell this property once, can you sell it twice? That's what you're depending on when you start selling property for a one-time fire sale, because you can't get rid of a structural deficit by selling off assets. You can't get rid of a structural deficit by selling off assets, and what we've got here in this province is a structural deficit because they can't balance the expenditures with the revenue. They're hoping that, at one point in time where those lines intersect—they are hoping that in 2017-18, those lines intersect and somehow we have a balanced budget. That's what they're hoping for. They are going to go to the people on June 14, 2018—I believe that's the scheduled date of the election. They're going to be able to go during that 28-day period or, before that, when they bring in the 2018-19 budget, and they're going to say, "We've got it balanced. We've got it licked."

But they haven't got anything licked, because the structural problems will still exist, because they haven't done anything to correct that. They're just selling off the family jewels. They are selling off the inheritances. It's like the guy who is spending like the prodigal son, and

then he gets the inheritance and he thinks, "Oh, I'm good." He was broke. "Oh, I've got lots of money now. Everything is fine." But unless he has balanced his income with his expenses, as soon as he spends off his daddy's money, he's broke again. That's what this government will end up doing in Ontario, because they're just spending the inheritance. They're not doing anything to attack the meat of the matter, which is the problems in budgeting here in the province of Ontario.

Now, I know I drifted a little bit there, but it's all about Hydro One and it's all about the energy sector, because that is the single biggest crown asset we have in this province and they're going to sell it off. I guess what people have to ask themselves is, "After Hydro One, what next? What are they going to sell next?"

But this was the thing that just got me: when we started getting this little note on our hydro bill this year that said, "We saved you money by you not paying the debt retirement charge." I don't owe it, but somehow they saved me money by not putting it on my bill. Wow. It's beyond unethical; it should even be illegal for them to make that claim, that somehow they are saving you money by having you not pay for something that you didn't owe. It's wrong.

1350

Interjection: There should be a forensic audit.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There should be a forensic audit, but at the very least it's shameful that they'll play that kind of game with energy customers who are on the brink as it is, Speaker.

I asked a question in the House this past week and got no fitting response from the energy minister; nothing whatsoever. But I spoke to a lady who volunteers at the food bank in Eganville. She told me that use of the food bank was up 30%. This is Eganville; it's a village of 1,300 people. The use of the food bank was up 30%. In fact, they ran out of food. When they would ask the people who were coming in what was bringing them there—because you have to wonder what causes a 30% increase in the clientele in a short period of time—almost to a person they told her, "We have to make a choice: If we pay the hydro bill, we can't afford food. If we buy food, we can't pay the hydro bill." Their hope is that they pay the hydro bill so they don't get it cut off and hope the food bank is there to help them through that crisis.

What happens when the food bank runs out of food? They've had no expectation that the increase would be that rapid and that severe, but that's what this government has done. They have forced people into energy poverty and driven them to food banks. In a province this rich, it's really sad.

It's also indicative and illustrative, Speaker, of how out of touch they are with the average person, particularly those people in rural Ontario who don't have high incomes. They have to drive to work and have no opportunity to get on public transit. They have to drive to work, if they're fortunate enough to have a job. But there's no public transportation so they have to invest in

a vehicle. They have lower incomes but they still must own a vehicle, which is expensive.

Then you've got gas prices. The municipalities don't even get a share of the gas tax from this government, even though they pay it on every litre of fuel put into one of those vehicles in rural Ontario. But this government doesn't give it to rural municipalities to be able to build their infrastructure.

They talk about what a priority infrastructure is. Now they've got these ads.

They're spending more of the money that maybe could go to families of autistic children, but no. Can you believe this, Speaker? They cut off IBI at the age of five now.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That's very misleading.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh. I'm going to sit down for a moment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the Deputy Premier to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Wow. I've been accused of many things in this House, but that isn't one of them.

I appreciate that the minister withdrew the comment.

Let me clarify: The government has cut off IBI treatments for children over the age of five. That is, in fact, the case—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm anticipating a point of order, and I would ask the member to ensure that his remarks are relevant with respect to the bill.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. That was indeed my point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member has the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to preface this by saying that everything I'm talking about references Bill 135. I want to bring this into the broad view of it if I could, because it is what happens when power becomes unfettered. When power gets unfettered and you don't have to talk to the people and you don't have to sit down with the opposition parties and you don't have to sit down at committee—when you can do whatever you want—that's when the greatest damage to the people gets done. That's what I'm trying to emphasize.

I will try to be a little more direct on Bill 135, but that's the principle I'm trying to illustrate here on how dangerous this bill is.

On Bill 135: This bill, and particularly schedule 2, which gives those unfettered powers to the minister, is perhaps one of the most dangerous pieces of legislation I've ever seen. This is something that I never actually anticipated when I came here. I never believed it would happen, but here it has happened.

We had committee hearings on this bill—my colleague from Toronto–Danforth was there for every one of them—and we suffered through them because we saw

exactly what those deputants were talking about. It didn't matter if you were representing an environmental group; it didn't matter if you were representing an energy association; it didn't matter if you were representing a group of unionized professionals that know the system inside out: The refrain was the same. "Don't proceed with this schedule, giving those kinds of powers to one person. It is dangerous." I don't think they could have emphasized it more.

I know that we brought amendments to the bill to the committee, hoping that somehow the government would change its view on that schedule. You see, under this new bill, we've got two organizations established by this government or other governments for the very purpose of protecting the people and the government from their own mistakes. The IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, is now an amalgamation of what the IESO was as well as the OPA, which was the Ontario Power Authority, which was established by this government under Bill 100 in 2005. I remember that Dwight Duncan was the minister at the time. He talked about how Bill 100 and the OPA were going to protect the consumer and protect the system and take the politics out of the electricity sector. Well, I guess the best way to not worry about those organizations that were supposed to take the politics out of the electricity sector was to just get rid of those organizations.

The OPA—I think correctly—was amalgamated into the IESO, but now the minister could just get all of the input from the IESO on a particular move that the government is talking about doing or considering, and then say, "Thank you very much for all your work. I appreciate it. We value your opinion, but I'm not going to pay any attention. I, the energy minister; you, the group of experts in the field that are in your positions because of your expertise because this is what you do for a living"—this is the group that have the letters behind their names that actually indicates that they are engineers or electricity experts. "Thank you for your input. It's well considered, but I don't like it because it doesn't fit with the political goals of this government."

1400

Is this what it has come down to? Is this what we're left to believe is the way to operate an electricity system: that the experts can be called upon to give their view and the minister can simply say no?

You have to ask yourself—and I say this to be kind to the minister: Why would you want that kind of power? For every mistake that you make—and if your previous record is any indication of what your record in the future is going to be, there will be many—you will have no one else to blame for your mistake.

That's what we're going to get with Bill 135, because the reality is that there are more of them than there are of us. We can't stop this bill from passing any more than we could force them to approve some of the very, very well-considered and sensible amendments that the third party and our party brought to the table in committee. If I'm counting right, I think there were 34 amendments.

I don't recall if any of yours were passed, I say to the member from Toronto—Danforth. I'm only being cheeky. I know that absolutely none of yours were passed and none of ours were passed either by the Liberal-dominated majority on the committee.

The spin doctors: Oh, boy, have they been out, Speaker. The Minister of Energy must buy ink by the barrel because he has been writing letters. I want to read you a letter that he wrote to the people in my riding.

"To the editor:

"This letter is in response to 'Hydro Rates Pushing People to Breaking Point: Yakabuski,' which appeared in the Feb. 28 edition of the Renfrew Mercury.

"As a long-standing member of the Legislature, MPP John Yakabuski, whom I consider a friend, should know that sooner or later his bombastic rhetoric would come into contact with the facts—and the facts will win. In a recent news article you quoted him saying '...since November the average bill has gone up \$187.' This is an incorrect and an outlandish claim; as calculated by the Ontario Energy Board, the average household pays \$150 per month using 750 kWh.

"Mr. Yakabuski casts Ontario's recent 2.5% increase as 'irresponsibly high,' notwithstanding these recent increases in other provinces: British Columbia (4%), Saskatchewan (5%), Manitoba (3.95%), and Newfoundland (3.6%). Residential rates in Ontario are higher than some provinces and competitive with other provinces, even after eliminating cheaper dirty coal generation, which most provinces continue to burn. We are less expensive than most US and European cities. Our industrial rates are among the lowest in North America....

"There are available price mitigation programs for residential and business consumers and conservation programs for both; has MPP Yakabuski been active enough promoting these benefits to the benefit of his constituents? Examples of conservation programs include Home Depot's 161 outlets using conservation programs to reduce consumption by 29 million kWh, saving millions, and taking the equivalent of 3,000 homes off the grid; or the city of Barrie using a program and replacing all street lights, saving taxpayers \$2 million annually; and more small businesses are participating every week across Ontario.

"By contacting your local utility or your MPP's office you can learn about programs to reduce your consumption."

That was in the Renfrew Mercury, April 29, 2016.

It's a lovely story that he's telling you. On one occasion, the rates in Manitoba, British Columbia or whatever may have gone higher than ours, on one particular increase, but if you measure this over the last few years, the gap continues to widen. In fact, in the province of Quebec, it's way less than half of what we pay.

The Minister of Finance said electricity rates are going down. The Minister of Energy says energy is a bargain.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, he says rates are going down. He's in the Hansard.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No, no.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, you guys aren't going to start correcting Hansard.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Minister of Energy says energy's a bargain. He's quoted in Hansard as having said that.

Well, I would want to say to the people in my riding—I'm not just talking to the folks in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell; I'm going to talk to the people in my riding, which I have on many occasions, and I say, if you agree with the Minister of Energy's—Bob Chiarelli, it says right on there. If you agree with his assessment of the energy sector, please write me. But if you agree with what I'm trying to do to reduce hydro bills and hold this government to account on the skyrocketing nature of those bills, please write the Minister of Energy.

In fact, I'll challenge the Minister of Energy. At the end of June, let's do a tabulation to see who's got more emails taking a position counter to what the recipient of the emails has taken. I'm very confident that the folks from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke are not going to agree with the Minister of Energy.

Another little story we've been talking about is these exorbitant contracts. The Minister of Energy is now saying that—we all know about the Green Energy Act, or maybe there are some Liberal backbenchers who haven't paid any attention yet because they're just doing what they are told. But in 2009, that passed. The Minister of Energy then was George Smitherman. It began this cascading mess which has driven up rates beyond recognition in the province of Ontario, because it seemed that the government was so zealous in promoting particularly wind that they were willing to pay just about anything. They signed contracts that were so lucrative to the developers that the developers were going around basically offering huge inducements to landowners, and now to municipalities themselves. The government now is allowing them to even offer inducements to municipalities. Some people would call them bribes. I don't even know—I wouldn't characterize them as that. Apparently, I can't even characterize them as that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You can't say indirectly what you can't say directly, so I'm going to ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. John Yakabuski: By all means, I withdraw, Speaker. I've just heard some people say that, but I won't repeat it.

But certainly inducements in order to declare themselves a wind-friendly community—and they are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. You could transfer it to the millions of dollars over the 20-year life of a contract. You have to ask yourself how much a developer is making on a contract when they can take millions of dollars and use that to get the positive motion from a municipality in declaring themselves wind-friendly, how much money they must be making when they can go to fundraisers with the Premier, the Minister of Energy and

the Minister of Finance where it costs \$7,500 to buy one ticket. What are they serving at these dinners: golden caviar? Like, what is going on: \$7,500 for one ticket for a meal? That's the kind of things.

Well, under this latest—the minister is now saying, well, these contracts aren't quite as lucrative under the large renewable procurement. That's the LRP, the new program. Interestingly enough, under this latest LRP, the seven developers that received contracts—horror of horrors, shock to my system—made donations to the Liberal Party over the last three years of over \$255,000. That's documented, Speaker. Now, I'll let the people decide what they want to call that. It's not for me to say, certainly not here in the Legislature—not directly or indirectly. But I'll let people decide what they think of \$255,000 to the Liberal Party from the very developers who were the successful bidders on the most recent round of renewable energy contracts. I'll let the people decide.

1410

I think, actually, that my colleagues in the third party have a motion that we're going to debate tomorrow that should delve into some of the fuzzy language in these contracts, or maybe some of the costly effects of these contracts. I'll be looking forward to being here for that motion tomorrow, because we sure would like to find out what's been going on.

I have another letter here that I read this morning. It's a pretty good letter. It captures it pretty well. A gentleman from Tweed, Ontario, Jim McPherson, says:

"Gridmonsters attack!

"Wind, solar power are inefficient, unreliable and make electricity grid more costly than it has to be."

As you know, the Auditor General said that we have paid, under this government's signing of all of these contracts—this is not about are renewable energy. It's about any energy at the right price, because it doesn't matter whether something is good or not good; if you pay too much for it, you have not done your job.

This government, according to the Auditor General—who is not seeking re-election, is beyond reproach, has no skin in the game and doesn't go to political fundraisers—she has said that this Liberal government paid over \$9.2 billion more than it should have paid for the renewable energy contracts—\$9.2 billion. Do the people out there even understand that, or is it too big of a number? This is huge. It's a scandal of epic proportions. They paid \$9.2 billion more in these contracts.

I say to these good folks in the gallery: That's all going on your hydro bill. Those contracts could have been signed for \$9.2 billion less, and that would have a marked effect in reducing your hydro bills—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You have to speak to the Speaker. We welcome our friends from the gallery, but you have to speak to the Speaker.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. That would reduce your hydro bill, Speaker. You pay too much—\$9.2 billion on those bills and you're paying too much. But it's not just you, Speaker; it's all of these

Liberal members, but I guess they figure it's a small price to pay to make the lady in the corner office on the second floor happy.

Let me read Jim McPherson's letter. It's not quite as big printing as I'd like.

"In his April 26 letter to the editor, energy minister Bob Chiarelli wrote that 'for the first time the cost of producing electricity from wind is below the average cost of producing electricity in Ontario.'

"Using this Orwellian 'doublespeak,' Chiarelli failed to mention that under his 20-year 'feed-in tariff' (FIT) contracts, we pay wind energy corporations much more, not less, than the rates we pay for each kilowatt of the hydro, nuclear or gas-generated electricity that wind energy replaces.

"In addition, in Ontario, most wind and solar energy is generated when not needed.

"In fact, wind and solar "farms" have become troublesome 'gridmonsters.'

"They are uncontrollable, cruel and unreasonably costly.

"Gridmonsters have a licence not only to kill, but also to bill.

"Enabled by Ontario's Green Energy Act, they drive up electricity prices while ravaging rural neighbourhoods and wildlife.

"They are malignant tumours attached to our electricity grid.

"They will continue to force electricity rates to rise unless we act now to bring them under rigorous control.

"When gridmonsters were in their infant stage, we were able to store their fluctuating output in rechargeable batteries for later use in electric cars or household power.

"But they have grown much too big for batteries, and they keep growing because governments keep feeding them subsidies.

"Gridmonsters were created by huge wind and solar corporations that lobbied governments for subsidies that guaranteed ongoing profits.

"That was the beginning of the scam, to which governments and citizens succumbed because of our fear of climate change.

"But unlike other energy sources, the sun and the wind cannot be turned on and off when demand fluctuates.

"On dark and still nights, gridmonsters lurk in rural fields.

"Then, when the sun shines or the wind blows, they invade power transmission lines.

"With government permission, they replace cheaper electricity from hydroelectric power, nuclear, or gas plants. Electricity rates then rise.

"When the wind dies or when the sun is obscured, the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) routinely fires up recently added backup natural gas power plants.

"Rates routinely rise again.

"Whenever we can't find consumers for this unneeded electricity, we pay solar and wind energy producers to not produce power. Rates rise more!

"Gridmonsters keep metastasizing. Ontario is exporting more and more excess green energy to Quebec or Michigan, at a loss of millions more dollars every month.

"Rates keep rising.

"Amazingly, the Ontario government recently invited proposals for even more subsidized, unneeded and unreliable wind factories and solar farms.

"In his April 26 letter to the editor, Chiarelli tries to make us believe that subsidized 'renewable energy is now on a level playing field with other forms of generation'!"

"To what end?"

"We now know gridmonsters cannot fight climate change. Ontario's"—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, while I have no problem with what the member is reading, I do suggest to the member that standing order 23(d) does preclude him from making what are called lengthy quotes directly from whatever it is he's reading. He's welcome to make his point with it but may not fill his remarks entirely with what it is that he is reading verbatim, which are in fact the words of someone else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don't interpret the standing order that way. I don't find that there's a point of order.

I return to the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker.

"To what end?"

"We now know gridmonsters cannot fight climate change. Ontario's professional engineers report wind and solar factories are actually causing an increase in carbon dioxide emissions.

"The federal government is an accomplice.

"It budgets our tax money to support the proliferation of provincial green energy fantasies.

"It ignores its responsibility to protect endangered and migrating wildlife from habitat destruction and migration hazards, and to protect humans from unhealthy turbine noise.

"It ignores its duty to safeguard charter rights of rural citizens seeking quiet enjoyment of their homes.

"Rural municipal governments know that wind and solar factories damage local economies and tourism.

"They realize gridmonsters are hazardous to humans and wildlife, drive up electricity prices, devastate neighbourhoods, depress property values and erode municipal tax bases.

"Provincial and federal governments do not care about local constituents, endangered and migrating wildlife and electricity prices.

"Rural municipal governments do care.

"They need to regain their authority to manage energy-related industrial developments in their own backyards.

"If we can't consume the energy generated by gridmonsters at the moment it's produced, we need to store it, or get rid of it affordably.

"It would probably be better to get rid of the politicians and the legislation that caused this problem.

"One way or another, we must put a stop to the gridmonster scam."

Mr. McPherson is a retired professional engineer now living in Tweed, where there are no industrial wind turbines. Mr. McPherson has said, in a colourful way, what I have said many times in this House about what the Green Energy Act has done to electricity prices and to our electricity system. To capture what he said: They continue to drive up the prices. They create instability in our grid, because the wind doesn't warn you when it's going to start to blow or not. So we have this challenge of trying to balance the system at all times.

1420

Speaker, for those who don't know, the energy system has to be continuously balanced. You cannot produce more energy than you can consume. If you produce more, you have to get rid of it some way. If it means you have to sell it or give it away, which is what we've been doing, because we accept all of the wind, that's costly. Or if we order generators to shut down because the wind has suddenly come on to the system, we have to pay them penalties for shutting down. That's the contractual mess that this government embarked on under the Green Energy Act: an unbalanced system that forces us to pay for energy when it's produced, or forces us to pay people not to produce energy.

When the minister talks about energy prices, and he says that the energy prices under the new LRP and the new contracts are actually competitive with other generation, don't be fooled for one second. If the minister wants to talk about the per-kilowatt-hour rate, good for him, but let's be clear. If you want to know what an energy contract costs the people of Ontario, you have to see the whole contract. The minister can't cherry-pick and say, "Oh, this is the rate that we're going to pay them for energy produced." We need to know what they're being paid in all of the add-ons, what they're being paid when energy is not produced, what they're being paid to shut down. We need to see copies of every energy contract this minister signs and every energy contract signed under this government because then and only then will the people of Ontario know what it is actually costing them to put the name on the dotted line. Don't just pretend that the per-kilowatt-hour rate tells the story, because it doesn't. I would challenge the minister.

The Premier talks about "accountability" and "transparency." How many times have we heard those words? How many times have we heard her talk about accountability and transparency? It's like that's why she was put on this earth, to bring accountability and transparency to this Legislature. Well, let's be accountable and let's be transparent. Let's bring every single energy contract out there and let the people see what's being paid, because if you think for one minute that you can be paying someone

for a wind contract in the seven-cents range and that same company can be paying a municipality \$100,000 a year just to declare that municipality friendly to that project, you must be dreaming in Technicolor. We know there are other clauses and there are other add-ons, and the people of this province have a right to know, because every day or every month, for sure, whenever you get your hydro bill—I get a hydro bill every month. Every time you pick up a hydro bill, every disastrous mistake that this government has made is on it. It's on that price.

We are paying—according to the Auditor General, we've already paid—not just in renewables, which is \$9.2 billion, but \$37 billion more than we should have paid since 2006. That's when we first heard about—they used to call it the provincial benefit because back in the day, sometimes it actually reduced your hydro bill. Now it just seems so ridiculous to call anything that is putting some businesses out of business a provincial benefit.

Now they call it the global adjustment. You'd think they were Galileo or somebody: "It's the global adjustment." Global adjustment: It's so big that it encompasses the world. Well, if you're looking at your hydro bill, sometimes you figure that there must be an extension cord for your outlet to the rest of the world, because that's what it seems like when you pay your bill—

Mr. John Vanthof: Yak, I think that Nostradamus would be closer than Galileo.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, whatever.

The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane likes Nostradamus.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I don't think that's quite what he said.

Mr. John Vanthof: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But anyway, we can have that scientific argument some other time.

The point that I'm trying to make is that they bring out such a term—"global adjustment"—that you'd almost think that they were powering the world, and with the rates, they probably are. Well, they're certainly feeding every Liberal-friendly developer out there—and not just at the \$7,500-a-plate dinners. I don't know what they're feeding them there, but it better be good.

But the people at home, Speaker—I'm going to have to get more time, because I barely got into some of the matter of the bill. I'm running out of time, and I see that I only have a minute or so left. I have got so many stakeholder comments here that I'm going to have some more time.

Every deputant but one who came to the committee said that this bill had to change, particularly schedule 2: It had to be eliminated so that the minister's power was not absolute. There's an old saying: "Absolute power corrupts absolutely"—I'm not suggesting that for a minute; I'm just saying an old saying, because I haven't got time to withdraw.

What I'm saying is, why would we do that? Why would the government want to do that? To protect the minister, we should not proceed with this. The government shouldn't proceed with it to protect themselves. But

the fact that they're doing it makes me very nervous, because if they can make this many mistakes and sign this many lucrative, exorbitant contracts under the old legislation, what are they going to do under the new? The people of Ontario: Where will they turn to with more power in the hands of this government? They've put people into energy poverty under the old rules. Under the new rules, no one in this province will be safe. Shame on them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to weigh in on the thoughtful and enthusiastic comments from the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke today on Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act. I always appreciate listening to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. Sometimes I learn things, and sometimes I'm just—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Amused?

Ms. Jennifer K. French:—sometimes I learn things.

I would like to comment on some of the fine points that he made, especially in terms of energy poverty and connecting it with his community and the food bank usage. We've been having this conversation since I've been elected. When people are forced to make the tough choices between keeping the lights on or feeding their families, those are impossible choices. Driving people to the food banks is an important part of this conversation.

He also brought in the voices of those in rural Ontario. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I've learned that, even though the government doesn't often talk about it, there are people with voices in rural Ontario and northern Ontario. It is very important to continue to bring voice to their issues and their situations. To his point, that they might not have the high incomes or the public transit: With the cost at the pump, the cost of living in our rural and northern communities, and when we're talking about hydro and the cost of hydro, these are challenging times.

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Also, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke brought us back to the committee process. I didn't sit in on this committee process but I sat in on many others, and it seems to be the same situation, that while we hear from people who are experts and weigh in, this is a government that is disregarding what they're hearing.

I'm out of time. That keeps happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is always a pleasure to follow my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, who appeared to have ascribed to himself a description of "bombastic," but I've known the gentleman for 13 years, and he's not bombastic. It may have been an unfocused, rambling harangue, but it was not bombastic.

There was one point that I'd like to clarify of the member's remarks. He was talking about the price of electricity. Let's look at the current price of electricity, off-peak, it's 8.7 cents; mid-peak, 13.2; and on-peak, 18 cents. This means that for most homes, their actual price

per kilowatt hour is in the 10-to-12-cent-per kilowatt-hour range.

At the end of last year, I looked up, through the US Energy Information Administration, as of the end of last year, what the electricity rates were in the various states around us. I converted them to Canadian cents per kilowatt hour using the then prevailing exchange rate of 75 cents: Connecticut, 25.9 cents per kilowatt hour—most places in Ontario, 10 to 12; Maine, 20.7; Massachusetts, 26.1; Vermont, 22.9; New York, 23.4; Pennsylvania, 18.8; Michigan, 19.4; Ohio, coal-powered, 16.81; Indiana, coal-powered, 14.8; Illinois, 15.8; Wisconsin, 18.4; and Minnesota, 15.7.

Speaker, any suggestion that Ontario power rates are the highest or growing faster just does not withstand an examination of the facts and a comparison with surrounding jurisdictions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: What a job our energy critic did. He spoke, as always, in a very articulate and eloquent way. He laid out our party's position on Bill 135.

I was, like every MPP, in my constituency over a week ago and met with a number of my local mayors. There was one conversation for me that stood out above all others, and it was meeting with the mayor of a small town. There's an arena in that small town, and hydro bills every month now are at least \$22,000 per month. That means that kids playing hockey, girls playing ringette, are paying higher fees, so it's really affecting moms and dads in my riding—and that's a small arena. I know some of these city arenas are a lot bigger, and the cost would be a lot more.

I was in a grocery store in my riding a year ago. Their hydro bills were \$8,000 a month; they're now \$10,000 a month—just a small Foodland grocery store in a small town in my riding. That means consumers, my constituents, are paying more for the cost of food, and ultimately, this small business is struggling to keep their lights on and those coolers operating.

Lastly, I met with an owner of a Crabby Joe's franchise in my riding. He was telling me that with the cost of electricity and this new ORPP that's coming in, they're going to really struggle to keep that business open.

This government is out of touch. They hear the same stories I'm hearing in my riding, and I just urge them to rethink their energy policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, listened with attention to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He has a way of delivering his message that makes you listen; good for him. But the message is still very important. At the end of the day, he talked about people not being able to make ends meet because of something as important as electricity. We have no choice. In 2016, all over our province, each and every one of us needs electricity. We

need it to be dependable and reliable and we need it to be there 24/7. Now we have a government that has decided to privatize our electricity system, despite everybody telling them that they don't want to. Eighty-five per cent of Ontarians tell this Liberal government that they do not want them to privatize Hydro, but it's as if they know better than 85% of the people of Ontario.

There was a huge rally in Sudbury—the Sudbury riding—this weekend for “Hydro One Not for Sale.” It was a miserable day. It was raining hard, but it didn't matter. Those volunteers came out and did some leafleting and delivered petitions to the MPP for Sudbury to make it clear that, in Sudbury people do not want the Liberal government to sell their assets.

Whenever I hear words like “broadening the ownership,” those are funny words to me, Speaker. Nobody uses those words when they want to be clear. You use words like this when you want to muddy the situation. You are selling Hydro One. You are privatizing our electricity system. Those are words that Ontarians understand, and this is what you're doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his reply.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from Oshawa, Mississauga–Streetsville, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Nickel Belt.

I want to focus on the comments from the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, who loves to play the numbers game, just like the minister. He cherry-picks the jurisdictions. Plus, in those jurisdictions, they talk about electricity in a single number. He didn't mention Manitoba and he didn't mention Quebec, but he mentioned Connecticut. What connection do we have to Connecticut? It's absolutely ridiculous that he'd bring it up. But they talk about an all-in price for hydro in those jurisdictions. When we talk about it here in Ontario, it's up to 18 cents a kilowatt hour, and that's just for the electricity. It doesn't include all the add-ons.

I just looked at my own hydro bill, which is not bad because it's just my wife and me there, and I'm away most of the week. But even at our place, it's about 23 cents a kilowatt hour when we do the add-ons. If you're a family of four in my riding—take a look at it—who has to do the wash and do clothes during the day because you can't be up all night because you've got four kids, then it's even more because it's 18 cents a kilowatt hour just for the power. So the member from Mississauga–Streetsville actually just perpetuates the silly numbers game that the minister tries to play.

To get up in here and pretend to those people struggling in my riding and other ridings that somehow electricity is a bargain in this province is absolutely ridiculous. It's shameful of them to try to play that charade. People are struggling and they're suffering in this province, and it's all because of the hydro policies of this government. When will they get it? When will they show some compassion for those people that can't take any more of it? Speaker, I've had enough of it. The

people in this province have had enough of it. It's time to change what you're doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill, Bill 135, a bill that slams shut the door on public intervention in the development of hydro planning in this province, a bill that one presenter who came to committee described as giving the Minister of Energy the powers of an energy czar—a massive concentration of power in the hands of one person and one cabinet. Because of that, this is a bill that will be condemned for years to come. This isn't one that will simply be lost in the woodwork; this is one that, in the future when there are inquiries into electricity scandals, will be cited. Committees, judges and commissions of inquiry will trace back where damaging, expensive and scandalous decisions started out, and they will have started out with this bill.

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This bill will be condemned as the public deals with unmanageable rising power rates. You can be sure, no matter what this government says, that rates are rising in a way that makes it unmanageable for families, for businesses and for institutions.

This bill will be condemned by a public that deals with the unexamined and unassessed environmental problems that flow from a process that has had environmental protection surgically removed.

Last week, I listened to the Minister of Energy and the member for Burlington as they did their leadoff speeches on third reading about this bill. Then I went and read what they had to say in Hansard. Their speeches were a festival of self-congratulation which surpassed most displays of that strange art even in this place. I had expected a variety of defences from the minister, defences around the issues of efficiency and timeliness with regard to this bill. They would have been wrong, but I would have understood why they tried to use them. What shocked me, Speaker, was that the key defence was the so-called success of the electricity policies pursued by this government. The mind boggles. The sheer boldness is breathtaking.

Let me just touch on a few of the noteworthy “successes” of this government on the electricity file.

The \$1.5 billion in surplus power that Ontario dumps every year on the electricity markets: a gift at pennies on the dollar to power users in New York and Michigan. Worse than that, we have been paying people to take the power, paying companies to take the power. The Auditor General notes in her 2015 report that Ontario paid \$32.6 million between 2009 and 2014 for other jurisdictions to take our power. We have paid provinces and states to take our power. Let that sink in: paid others to take our power. The surplus power that we sell at a huge discount or pay people to take is power that we, the families and businesses of Ontario, have to pay full price for. Is it a wonder that power rates are soaring in Ontario? Absolutely not.

Let's look at another “success”: smart meters. In 2006, the government relegated the Ontario Energy Board to the role of implementing ministerial directives related to the smart metering initiative, with no independent public scrutiny. As a result, Ontarians wound up with a \$2-billion boondoggle. Smart meters were supposed to substantially cut peak power that was used in Ontario, and if that in fact had been the case, it would have allowed a reduction in costs for gas peaker plants. It didn't do that. It didn't even come close to doing that. We spent \$2 billion with virtually no savings, opening the door at the same time to a variety of cyber security and privacy problems that this government has yet to address. The government ignored the Ontario Energy Board as a regulator when it brought in smart meters. In the end, no regulator, no public process, allowed for a detailed examination of the assumptions and conjectures of the government. Effectively, they were allowed to plunge forward unchecked, and we got stuck with the tab.

Yet another “success”—and I find it astounding to think of how the Minister of Energy considers these things a success—the gas plant scandal. Yes, Speaker: With these successes, this is truly a planning regime to write home about.

This bill perpetuates a regime of power planning that the Auditor General picked apart in her 2015 report and one that faced strong objections at committee hearings on the bill. I'll turn to that Auditor General report for more backup as I get further into the speech, but first I want to bring in some of the voices of those who appeared before committee to talk about the more damaging aspects of this bill.

The first presenter I want to quote is the co-chair of the Sustainable Energy Initiative at the faculty of environmental studies at York University, Mark Winfield. Now, one of the things that was—what could I say?—surprising or, in fact, shocking to me was how this witness was dismissed by the Liberal members of that committee after he had made his testimony. Professor Winfield is a heavy hitter. He's a man who has got long experience in environmental issues, is well respected for his analysis of power issues in Ontario—not someone to be dismissed lightly at all. What he had to say, on background:

“The electricity system planning process established in 2004 through the Electricity Restructuring Act”—so this was an act brought in place by the Liberal government of the time—“created and mandated the Ontario Power Authority to develop integrated power system plans for the province's electricity system. These plans were then subject to review and approval by the Ontario Energy Board on the basis of their cost-effectiveness and prudence.”

Professor Winfield sets out the legislative history of the planning process that we're dealing with and that this government is dismantling:

“Ontario regulation 277/06, made under the Electricity Act around the same time, required that the OPA demonstrate to the OEB that it considered sustainability

and environmental protection and safety in the development of those plans.” He set the context for us. What did the government intend? How did it refine its intent to ensure that the major issues that are to be considered in power planning were addressed?

He went on to say, “At its core, Bill 135 would abandon even this very limited structure of public review of proposed system plans. System plans would be developed by the Minister of Energy and approved by the cabinet. The OEB and the IESO would then be required to implement these plans. There would be no requirement for review or approval before the Ontario Energy Board.

“In my view, quite bluntly, this proposal is bad in terms of energy policy, it’s bad in terms of economic policy, it’s bad in terms of environmental policy and it is also politically unwise. It seems the government hasn’t learned very much from the gas plant cancellation adventure.”

Those are very strong words. This is someone with substantial background in this matter, who knows the energy system in Ontario and is well regarded in the environmental field, who has said that this bill is profoundly damaging, bad in terms of economic policy, bad in terms of environmental policy and politically unwise.

He says,

“Electricity system plans are the largest single net infrastructure investments made by the province.” And he’s right. We’re talking about the nervous system for Ontario. We’re talking about the circulatory system. We’re talking about critical factors for the running of a society. Anyone who was around for the failure of the electrical system in August 2003 knows that when the electricity system goes out, society grinds to a halt.

He says, “They”—the electricity systems—“carry with them major economic and environmental risks around the technological choices, costs and performance of different technologies. They carry risk of underbuilding or overbuilding infrastructure in a period of high economic uncertainty, and they carry risks of technological lock-in in what may be the most significant period of technological innovation in the electricity sector since the emergence of utility systems a century ago. We have seen game-changing developments in renewable energy technology, smart grids, distributed generation and energy storage.”

He’s right. It’s been a century since large-scale electricity production and widespread transmission have become a reality in industrialized societies. We are now going through, in this decade and the decade to come, far-reaching and profound changes to the way electricity is generated, distributed and used. This is not a time for ad hoc, partisan-driven planning. This is a time for sensible assessment of the options before us and planning for the long term, not planning for the next election.

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He notes, “The proposed legislation would mean that system plans and their contents would be subject to no meaningful external review”—no meaningful external review. “There would be no review of their economic rationality, cost-effectiveness or prudence through the

Ontario Energy Board. There would be no environmental review under the Environmental Assessment Act or any other mechanism. There would be no review in terms of their resilience and ability to adapt to changing economic, social or technological circumstances. And there will be no opportunities for non-governmental stakeholders—non-governmental organizations, industry, consumers and others—to challenge in a formal way key assumptions, data and risks that the plans may embed.

“In effect, this legislation abandons the notion of rational planning in the electricity system. The long-term design and management of the system would be effectively treated as a political matter. Ontario needs a rigorous, independent review of electricity system plans before they’re finalized to move toward implementation.”

This bill—and I think his words are entirely reasonable—“abandons the notion of rational planning in the electricity system.” That abandonment of rational planning has already damaged Ontario. It has damaged Ontario families and it has damaged those who try to cope with rising electricity bills and with a system that is not adapted to a changing climate.

What he has to say is a profound warning for this province, for this government, for all of us as legislators who are supposed to do our best to protect the interests of Ontarians. He said that this bill is not going to protect them. In fact, and I’ll go on, it puts them at risk.

Let’s see what others had to say. We had Scott Travers, president of the Society of Energy Professionals, come and speak. The Society of Energy Professionals represents the technical and managerial staff who work at Hydro One, the Independent Electricity System Operator, Bruce Power, Ontario Power Generation, Toronto Hydro, the Ontario Energy Board, the Electrical Safety Authority. It represents those people who have the professional and technical ability to run the system that this province depends on, and they are not pleased with this bill. They see this bill as undermining, as Mr. Winfield did, rational planning of the electricity system.

Mr. Travers said, “To be able to ensure that Ontario maintains the energy system’s integrity over the span of decades requires a technical plan that emphasizes evidence-based planning.”

Yes, Speaker, we want evidence-based planning when we’re investing billions of dollars. We want evidence and scientific methods when we’re deciding how exactly we’re going to provide ourselves with electricity over the decades to come. The abandonment of that approach is an irresponsible approach.

“As history has shown, when we get the energy planning process right, Ontario’s sizable investment in infrastructure pays dividends in Ontarians’ quality of life, our environmental health and economic well-being. However, we also know that if the government fails to get planning issues right, the results can be very costly, resulting in wasted time, wasted effort and wasted public money.”

It’s a very clear outline of the issues by the head of the Society of Energy Professionals, the head of the

organization that represents those who run our electricity system. He notes that in 2004, the Liberal government brought in the planning system that is being abandoned with this bill. At the time, Dwight Duncan, who was the Minister of Energy, stated that the system that he was bringing in aimed to provide “concrete action to put the energy sector back on a solid footing after years of mismanagement and political interference by previous governments.”

Speaker, it has to be recognized that with this bill, the whole notion of putting the energy sector back on a sound footing is being abandoned.

Mr. Travers talked about the integrated power supply plan that is supposed to be at the centre—at the core—of power planning in Ontario. “The ultimate strength of the IPSP process lies in its use of the Ontario Energy Board hearing process to allow a full vetting of the plan in an open, transparent and participatory venue. It is natural and, in fact, desirable that complex and contested issues such as electricity system planning should attract competing visions, approaches and interests.”

Speaker, note how different that is from what the minister wants to put in place. What he wants to put in place is a system where he, the minister, dictates. He gets to put out a plan that people can comment on. He can ignore those comments and go on. It is very different, profoundly different, from what is supposed to exist now: a process in which, in an open forum, an open tribunal, evidence can be assessed, witnesses cross-examined and, frankly, skepticism can be allowed full rein so that the truth of what is happening and the truth of what’s being put forward can be assessed. That is not what is going to happen with Bill 135.

Mr. Travers notes, “The open nature of the OEB processes allows industry stakeholders, consumer and ratepayer representatives, community and specific interest groups, as well as members of the general public, to make comment or participate as intervenors. They may introduce their own evidence, seek to have plan proponents provide additional evidence, challenge evidence which has been presented by others, and make arguments based on evidence that’s in the record.”

Again, Speaker, what Mr. Travers outlined is a process very different from the informal one that the Liberals have had in place for the last decade and that they want to formalize with this bill. Again, effectively, the government gets to put together their plan and people get to comment. They don’t get to cross-examine. They don’t get to present their own evidence. They’re just along for the ride. And the regulator, the Ontario Energy Board, simply is cut out of that process.

Mr. Travers notes that “the 2015 annual report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario included an in-depth review and audit of the electricity system planning process in Ontario. The Auditor General found that ‘over the last decade, this power system planning process has essentially broken down, and Ontario’s energy system has not had a technical plan in place for the last 10 years. Operating outside the checks and balances of the

legislated planning process, the Ministry of Energy has made a number of decisions about power generation that have resulted in significant costs to electricity consumers.’”

Speaker, he noted that the Auditor General found that this planning process that the minister has in place, that he’s trying to formalize with this bill, still was “‘not sufficient for addressing Ontario power system’s needs and for protecting electricity consumers’ interests.’”

“Bill 135 seeks to make fundamental changes to the planning process, including eliminating the requirement for the IESO to develop an IPSP—or a technical plan, as the AG refers to it—vesting such planning authority in the Minister of Energy. At the same time, the Bill 135 approach would reduce the mandatory oversight role of the OEB to a simple review of the capital costs of implementation. The society believes that the proposed alterations to the planning process would severely hamper the political independence and effectiveness of the electricity system planning process and oversight in a way detrimental to the public good.

“In essence,” he says, “Bill 135 seeks to enshrine in legislation a planning process which has been found severely wanting. It is the opinion of the society that the effect of Bill 135, as written, is inherently incompatible with complying with system planning best practices and with the recommendation of the Auditor General’s report with respect to the system planning process.”

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Speaker, the representative of the body of women and men who are the professionals that we rely on to run our electricity system has said that this bill fundamentally undermines what is needed in Ontario for proper power planning. When you put it in terms of proper power planning, it’s sort of a distant, dry, administrative thing, but it determines whether your bills, my bills, our bills for electricity will be affordable. It determines whether or not the system will be sustainable. It determines whether or not the system will be reliable.

All of those things rest on the ability to actually plan the system properly and ensure that the considerations that dominate when we invest tens of billions of dollars are those that relate to the best interests of Ontarians, not to the short-term political interests of the party in power.

In summarizing the failure to maintain proper oversight of this process by the Ontario Energy Board, Mr. Travers says, “Removing the OEB from this role would mean that there would be no public forum or regulatory decision-making body to vet the technical and economic soundness of the energy plan.”

That is what happened to us with the smart meters. The Ontario Energy Board was not asked to review the process, they were not asked to do an analysis and they weren’t asked to assess the evidence. They were simply told to implement.

In the end, the consequences could have been foretold. In fact, Howard Hampton, the former head of the Ontario NDP, said at the time that this was a bad business decision, a mistake. He referred to the smart meters as

"McGuinty meters"; that's about as damning as you get, I guess. And he was right: \$2 billion with very little to show for it.

I asked Mr. Travers what risk this bill posed to the people of Ontario. He said, "There's quite a bit of risk, actually. There's risk of failure to vet the plan against the objectives. In Bill 135, the problem would be that you still state objectives at the beginning, then you ask for technical input, but no one actually tests that the plan that ends up being produced is the most economic, reliable, efficient way to meet the objectives. There's no oversight. There's no testing of the plan...."

"There's no opportunity to vet that input, so stakeholders could be giving erroneous information to the ministry. There's no opportunity for other stakeholders to challenge the veracity of that information, nor do we know what the ministry does with the information" provided by stakeholders.

Speaker, the people who actually run the system, who have the professional background to run a sophisticated 21st-century grid over a huge land mass, believe that this electricity planning process is fundamentally flawed, a mistake and one that shouldn't be going forward.

We also had the Canadian Environmental Law Association come to speak to committee and make a presentation. Their presentation was focused more on environmental factors, but was as strong in its rejection as the rejection of the Society of Energy Professionals. To quote them, "We are opposed to the bill."

"In my presentation today," said Jacqueline Wilson, counsel for the Canadian Environmental Law Association, "I'm going to focus on three issues. The first is the reduced accountability for long-term energy planning brought in by Bill 135; in particular, the concentration of power for long-term energy planning with the minister and the reduced role for the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board. The second issue I will address is the decreased opportunities for public participation in the system brought in by this bill; in particular, our concern with the reduced access to documents. Finally, the third issue I'm going to address is that environmental considerations have been sidelined by this bill. There's no mandatory duty on the minister in the long-term energy planning process to consider a whole slew of very important environmental concerns, and the long-term energy plans are again exempted from the Environmental Assessment Act."

She went on to say, "In terms of reduced accountability, power is concentrated now for long-term energy plans with the minister. The power of other actors in the system has been significantly reduced by the amendments brought forward in Bill 135."

Speaker, that's consequential. We spent a lot of money setting up the Independent Electricity System Operator. We spent a lot of money setting up the Ontario Power Authority, which has now been merged with the IESO. We spend a lot of money on the Ontario Energy Board, the regulator, and yet in terms of the planning that needs to be done in this province, they have been largely

sidelined. That will be consequential for us; consequential in terms of the environmental sustainability, cost and reliability of the electricity system that we depend on.

She notes that, "Under the old system, the Ontario Energy Board hearings would provide an independent eye and look at" the plans brought forward by the Independent Electricity System Operator. That process "included significant public participation rights." That power is completely removed by this bill. "There's absolutely no independent review of the long-term energy plans contemplated by this bill."

That's right, Speaker. The minister can say all he wants about consultation, but the reality is that the level of public participation in this process of electricity planning has been dramatically reduced in this bill.

Ms. Wilson notes that the minister has said that all kinds of documentation on power use and projected power demand will be provided to the public, but she notes that the section in the bill that relates to this matter "contemplates the release of other important documents only after the long-term energy plan is issued. In its language it contemplates 'key data and cost projections'" being made available. They would be released at this time at the end of the process "when it's too late, when the long-term energy plan has already been issued. It's absolutely essential for the public to have access to that type of information before the long-term energy plan is issued and during the consultation process. Those two sections do not provide enough information to the public for true engagement on the minister's long-term energy plan."

Speaker, it can be dressed up in as fancy a way as the minister can imagine, in as fancy a way as the communications director for the minister's office can imagine, but the fundamental reality is this: The key data that people will need to do an in-depth assessment of the energy plan that comes forward won't be released until after the energy plan is all put together. People can go on and chat as much as they like, they can talk about what they don't like and what they do like, but their ability to get at the critical pieces of information won't be there. That is a fundamental flaw in this bill.

She notes that people should compare the process in this bill to the Ontario Energy Board's, previously, "where the interveners had access to all of the written evidence that would be relied on to justify the plans. They could submit alternative evidence, argument, interrogatories and cross-examine witnesses."

That's a process in which the public actually has the opportunity to get at the heart, the nub of the issue, to really delve into the information, find the flaws, bring them out and have a process that will really make sure the public is a partner in all of this. They're done in; that's it.

Ms. Wilson noted that "The Environmental Assessment Act is also exempted under this legislation. Long-term energy plans and all related undertakings are again exempted. Not only is there no Ontario Energy Board process, there's no independent process to study the

environmental impacts of these long-term energy plans either.”

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That’s a huge problem. There’s all kinds of discussion about environmental protection, all kinds of discussion about sustainability. But if in fact the energy plan, which will be so central to the operation of the province for decades to come, is exempted from an environmental assessment, then the ability, in this case—setting aside the numbers on demand, on cost—to get at the environmental consequences of what’s being brought forward have been profoundly damaged.

She notes, “An Environmental Assessment Act review of a long-term energy plan would require appropriate consideration of alternatives and the likely environmental effects of the proposal. That analysis of long-term energy plans is totally missing from Bill 135.”

Whatever the influential group of insiders decides that the minister needs to actually put forward as a plan—whatever minister is subject to the pressure, to the inducements, of those insiders, those lobbyists—that will be the plan that comes forward. An assessment of the alternatives, looking at what perhaps is more cost-effective, perhaps more environmentally beneficial—that process won’t exist. This bill rolls back protection for consumers for protection against soaring hydro rates, but it also sets aside protection against profound environmental mistakes. That is not supportable.

Ms. Wilson concluded by saying, “In summary, CELA does not support the changes to the long-term energy planning system. There’s decreased accountability and transparency. Power is concentrated with the minister, and the role of other important actors in the system, like the IESO, the OEB and the public, are significantly diminished, and the environment is sidelined, including by exempting long-term energy plans from the Environmental Assessment Act.”

That is a powerful list of negatives that flow from this bill, a powerful list of negatives that should say to everyone in this chamber that this bill must be defeated.

This is a bill that rolls back decades of transparency. It rolls back the development of environmental assessment in this province. This is a bill that makes for a much riskier planning system and a much less reliable, much less sustainable electricity system in the years to come.

I have to say, after her testimony, we had an opportunity to ask questions. My colleague Mr. John Yakabuski asked, “Can you find me anywhere in here”—referring to the bill—“that this Bill 135, as written, strengthens the Ontario Energy Board?”

Ms. Wilson: “No, I don’t think this bill does strengthen the Ontario Energy Board. As I mentioned, the main role of the Ontario Energy Board in the past, under the old legislation, was to provide an independent forum of review for the IESO’s plans.... That power is gone in Bill 135.”

On a regular basis, you can listen to the minister talk about the power of a rejuvenated Ontario Energy Board and its ability to protect consumers and protect the

province against unreasonable price increases. But Speaker, it is very clear that this bill is all about eviscerating that Ontario Energy Board, making it a sock puppet—not a guard dog, a sock puppet. That’s what this government wants to do with it.

I had an opportunity to ask Ms. Wilson a follow-up question, and I asked, “This bill certainly doesn’t strengthen the OEB. Does it diminish its powers?” Her response was: “Yes, I think this bill significantly diminishes the power of the Ontario Energy Board.” That was very powerful testimony from that witness.

We also had before us the Green Energy Coalition, with two speakers: counsel Mr. David Poch and a senior energy analyst at Greenpeace Canada, Shawn-Patrick Stensil. Mr. Stensil noted that the Auditor General came out with a report in December discussing the problems with power planning over the last decade. He noted that the government had tried to portray this bill as a response to the flaws, the problems that were pointed out by the Auditor General. Mr. Stensil would take issue with any suggestion that the bill that was coming forward was a positive response to the flaws pointed out by the Auditor General.

He said, “We actually see that this bill will make some of the problems identified in the auditor’s report worse by removing checks on the power of the minister and by lowering transparency.”

Speaker, this bill rolls back transparency. It drops a heavy curtain over the information that the public needs to assess power plans. It concentrates power in the hands of one man, the Minister of Energy, the energy czar. It is a step back for democracy, not a step forward.

Mr. David Poch, counsel for the Green Energy Coalition, spoke: “I’ve styled the bill the ‘energy czar act,’ with all due respect to the minister. That’s what it de facto is. It’s a total concentration of power. It’s a retreat from public process. I’m astounded by the doublespeak that we’ve been hearing. It’s going to eliminate the OEB’s public hearing review of energy plans and eliminate environmental review of energy plans. It will not ensure transparency or accountability. And I think the conclusion is that it’s going to encourage more gas plant fiascos and white elephant megaprojects.”

I think Mr. Poch is entirely right. I don’t think that this government has learned anything from the gas plant fiasco. It certainly learned nothing from the smart meter boondoggle. All of the conditions that allowed for those two monumental wastes of public money are going to be codified and brought forward in this bill: an elimination of meaningful public participation; a dramatic reduction in transparency; and a dramatic concentration of power in the hands of the minister. None of this bodes well for Ontario. All of this speaks to future threats and risks to this province and its electricity system.

In talking about the removal of environmental assessment, of environmental protection in this process, Mr. Stensil had this to say: “What I would also flag from an environmental perspective that we didn’t get to in the presentation is that this bill effectively ends sustainability

assessment in the Ontario legal system. This has been death through a thousand cuts. You may remember Minister Broten justifying a regulation in 2006 that removed provincial environmental assessments. This is now basically codifying that as well. From an environmental perspective, that is not a good thing moving forward. We hope that could also be addressed in the longer term."

Mr. Poch added, "Part of the rationale for taking energy projects out of environmental assessment per se was because this IPSP process could look at those things—or the joint board process before it. Now there's no such thing, so there is no environmental review of the choice between alternative energy paths."

Speaker, this bill narrows the potential for the public to actually have an impact. It narrows it to the point of invisibility. It narrows it profoundly.

Last week, the minister talked about this bill and had a very different view of things. He said, "Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to focus on ensuring that our electricity system is clean, reliable and affordable for all. That can only be accomplished with a modern, updated planning framework, which Bill 135 would provide."

First off, to say that this system is affordable is—I'm looking for parliamentary language that I can use. It in no way reflects the reality experienced by the vast majority of Ontarians. I think that's about as neutral as I can get. They would not call it affordable. As I go through my riding of Toronto–Danforth, which, compared to many other ridings in the province, is relatively well off, people are starting to complain about their electricity bills because they find they are growing at an unsustainable rate.

1520

I also want to note the question of reliability. This is a government that has not planned for adaptation to a changing climate. In 2013 in Toronto, a significant storm wiped out power in a big chunk of the west end of the city. This is a threat that we had known about for a long time. This government was not prepared for that. The ice storm in December of that year, something that we had been talking about since the mid-1990s: The government was not prepared for that.

This planning process is not going to address reliability. This planning process will make some specific, individual, private interests very wealthy; no question there. That's apparent. But in terms of the public, openness and protection of the system, no. This bill is a set-up for failure.

This is a government that has been ignoring its own laws for years. The energy planning regime that will be legitimized with this bill is the one that has actually been in place. So we don't need to guess or speculate about what impact it will have when it's actually formally put into law, because we've already seen the result of its operation. Frankly, it does not bear out the minister's claim.

I'm going to go back to the Auditor General, who published her 2015 annual report at the end of last year.

One of the most important chapters was the one that dealt with electricity planning in Ontario.

Her summary was fairly straightforward. She wrote, "An enormous amount of technical planning is required for Ontario to determine how it will meet its future electricity demands. The importance of this type of planning is reflected in provincial legislation: The Electricity Act ... was amended in 2004 to require the Ontario Power Authority ... to conduct independent planning and prepare an 'integrated power system plan,' a technical plan to help Ontario meet its future electricity demands. To protect the interests of consumers," the Ontario Energy Board was to "review and approve the technical plan to ensure it is prudent, cost-effective, and consistent with the government's supply mix directive." She set out the context within which planning is supposed to happen in Ontario, what the history was of the legislation, what the role was of the different players in that system.

She goes on to write, "But over the last decade, this power system planning process has essentially broken down, and Ontario's energy system has not had a technical plan in place for the last 10 years. Operating outside the checks and balances of the legislated planning process, the Ministry of Energy has made a number of decisions about power generation that have resulted in significant costs to electricity consumers."

I want to note that the minister and the member from Burlington spoke glowingly about this bill last week, this bill that has been assessed and found wanting by the Auditor General. She says the power planning process has broken down, that the Liberal government has ignored its own laws.

Now, I don't know about you, Speaker, but I find it kind of shocking that we go through all this debate, committee work, public consultation, proclamation, and the government ignores the law with a very casual approach: "Yeah, we passed that law—kind of interesting; nice to have it on the books—but we don't have to operate the way the law says. We just ignore it."

She notes that the decisions made with this process that has operated outside the law have resulted in significant costs to electricity consumers. This is not back-patting territory. This is ashamed-to-be-in-public territory. That's what we have on our hands. That's what is being codified in this bill.

The minister constantly uses the Ontario Energy Board as a shield against criticism for the sale of Hydro One, saying that this very vigorous regulator will protect the public against unreasonable price increases. But as the Auditor General made clear, the OEB has been cut out of the planning process and increasingly will oversee a smaller and smaller part of the electricity system. She writes that the Ontario Energy Board "was not given an opportunity to review the technical plans as is required under the Electricity Act."

Interesting. Again, not only does the government write its plans ignoring the laws that it put in place, but it also doesn't allow the Ontario Energy Board, the regulator, its legal task of reviewing those plans. The OEB "has not

been able to ensure that Ontario's technical energy planning has been carried out in a prudent and cost-effective manner to protect the interests of electricity consumers over the past 10 years."

Is anyone shocked that our electricity rates are soaring? Is anyone surprised that a plan that's not reviewed in an open forum where the public has a chance to actually go after the evidence—is anyone surprised that this process has resulted in soaring hydro rates? We shouldn't be. This government ignores the law in a very substantial part of Ontario's life, and we all pay the price, the consequences.

"From 2004 to 2014, the amount that residential and small-business electricity consumers pay for the electricity commodity portion (includes global adjustment fees) of their bill has increased by 80%, from 5.02 cents/kWh to 9.06 cents/kWh." When you have a planning process that is not transparent or open or one that brings in the public, then the door is open to all kinds of abuses, mistakes, white elephants, fiascos and scandals.

The OEB is becoming increasingly irrelevant as the minister continues on with his plans. What about these claims by the minister in his speech that the process is open, transparent and accessible? What did the Auditor General find actually happened on the ground?

"In 2010, the ministry published its 'long-term energy plan' ... a shorter, more policy-oriented document outlining Ontario's energy goals and supply mix for the next 20 years. Although there is no legislative requirement for the ministry to prepare such a plan, the ministry updated its policy plan in 2013...."

The Auditor General noted that while "the ministry's 2013 policy plan provided more technical information than the 2010 policy plan, we found that this plan was still not sufficient for addressing Ontario power system's needs and for protecting electricity consumers' interests."

I think that's a pretty profound statement for an Auditor General, to say that the plan was inadequate to protect the interests of the people of Ontario and did not actually provide the information, the analysis, needed for the system. She noted:

"—No cost/benefit analysis of other alternatives—The ministry's 2010 and 2013 policy plans did not present the detailed cost/benefit analyses of the different scenarios and alternatives included in technical plans, such as the plans the" Ontario Power Authority "prepared ... in 2007 and 2011."

Former leader of the Ontario NDP Howard Hampton made many impassioned speeches in this chamber about the need to put conservation first as a way of dealing with soaring hydro prices. As we were phasing out coal and building all kinds of gas plants, we could have invested heavily in far cheaper efficiency and conservation, sparing families and businesses much of the disruption that they've had to go through in dealing with soaring hydro prices. But this is a government that didn't want to consider those options or alternatives and still doesn't want to consider options or alternatives that are, environmentally or economically, far more beneficial for the people of Ontario.

The minister claimed that the consultation process would be open and transparent, consistent with the government's open dialogue program—which I have to say I found vastly entertaining, not that I've noticed a lot of openness. The minister talked about all those who participated in the consultations and about the number of submissions considered. I want to go back to the hard and fairly cold reality of what the Auditor General found. In her report, she had the headline, "Questionable stakeholder consultation process—The ministry undertook a two-month stakeholder consultation process for its 2010 policy plan but could not provide us with a summary of the responses it received."

1530

Speaker, if you have a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry to interrupt, but I want to welcome to the Ontario Legislature this afternoon the former member from Mississauga South in the 38th Parliament, Mr. Tim Peterson, who was here for some time. There he is; he's still here. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature. You can't give a speech.

Again, I return to the member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

The ministry undertook a two-month consultation and couldn't provide a summary at the end of what people had to say. There are different theories. One theory is that a summary was written, but it was a top-secret document. When the Auditor General's staff were hammering on the minister's door, the deputy minister was eating the only copy so that no evidence would be found. That is one option.

The other option is that the consultation—the words spoken and the documents presented—were never allowed to sully the untouched ears of ministerial political staff. They were never allowed to disturb the calm that the minister was feeling as he went forward with the plan. Did the deputy minister eat a secret document, or did the minister and his staff totally ignore the consultations? I leave it to discerning legislators to come to their own conclusions. What is most likely?

I note that the plan was released five days after the consultations were ended. So that's two months of consultations—five days after the consultation period ended. Now, again, there are two theories. The consultation ended and, frantically, over 48 hours, everything that was said was analyzed and synthesized, and people worked non-stop doing writing, editing, proofreading, laying out a report, publishing a report and bringing it out. That is one theory. The other is that the plan was written long before the consultations ended—laid out, written, edited, proofread and published, while people were still going on at length in meeting rooms. Again, I leave it to discerning members of the public or discerning legislators to establish which is the more likely course of reality. I have my sense, Speaker. I have my sense.

But I want to again ask the members in this chamber, do we vote for bills in the expectation that the laws that are passed will actually be of consequence? What are we doing here, when we pass bills that are supposed to bind

the government and which the government ignores, when the proclamation of a bill is, frankly, irrelevant to whether it will be of consequence in the years to come, because this government quite happily ignores them?

For those members of the public who may well want to comment on these energy plans, these electricity plans, knowing that, most likely, in the most plausible scenario, what they have to say is ignored, and the report is written and published before they're finished speaking—what kind of democracy is this, Speaker, where the laws are irrelevant and so are the opinions and thoughts of the public? With that approach, this Liberal government makes a mockery of democracy in this province.

This government has ignored the law and has ignored the technical bodies that it set up to assist it in doing planning. The Auditor General: "When the OPA/IESO merger legislation passed in July 2014, it included a provision still requiring the new entity (the IESO) to prepare a technical plan and submit it to the Ontario Energy Board for review. After the merger took place in 2015, the new IESO wrote to the ministry about potential changes to the long-term planning process. At the time of our audit"—the Auditor General's audit—"the ministry had not responded or provided the IESO with any direction regarding the preparation of a technical plan."

The IESO, a pretty sophisticated body employing some very capable professionals, was treated as an irritant, as an errant child tugging at the minister's jacket: "Please, Minister, what instructions do you have for us? Will we be following the law or not this year?" And what was the response? The response was silent.

If a sophisticated body charged with putting together technical plans and running the electricity system in Ontario is treated as a minor irritant that can be ignored safely, how, then, are the words and thoughts of citizens out there concerned about electricity planning to be treated? Will they be treated better than an operation that has a big operation here in Ontario and employs sophisticated power planners? I don't think so. I think they will be treated with the same lack of respect, the same disdain, as the bodies that have been set up to actually run the electricity system in this province.

My time is short, but I can't pass further without noting that this is a government that has set up the conditions for an incredible shrinking regulator. This is a government that has cut the OEB out of the planning process. This is a government that, because of the way it has defined which power contracts will be regulated and won't, is increasingly making sure that the Ontario Energy Board doesn't review rates. By law, the OEB may only review rates for nuclear power from Pickering and Darlington, and for hydro power produced by OPG. This means that OEB's oversight is limited to about 35% of Ontario's current installed capacity. The way things are going, it's going to drop down to a quarter.

If 75% of the power system is not reviewed by the regulator, do you actually have a regulated power system?

Ms. Catherine Fife: No.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I would say no. My colleagues have been interjecting, but I will echo what they've said: No. That's not what you have. We hear from the minister that the OEB will protect the public from new, higher rates and protect them from Hydro One, but, in fact, this government has systemically made sure that the OEB is cut out. Sure, their offices may be shiny; I don't know. Sure, people may have nice desks and great computers. But, in fact, they will be regulating less and less of the electricity system. That, for us in this province, means greater and greater risk.

This bill is odious. This bill damages Ontario. This bill perpetuates an approach on the part of the government that sidelines the public, puts us at risk for much higher electricity rates and puts us at risk for more gas plant scandals and smart meter boondoggles. This bill is a step backward for democracy in Ontario, not a step forward. There's no basis whatsoever for anyone in this chamber to support it—not anyone who likes to say with a straight face that they're interested in the condition of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Beaches–East York. I listened carefully to the remarks that he made—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I am from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I beg your pardon; Toronto–Danforth. I correct my record on that.

He didn't mention the present system, which I believe is called the Integrated Power System Plan or something very close to that. Now, one could ask, if the present system was so good, how many power plans, how many long-range plans, did it ever produce? Answer: none.

1540

So beginning just prior to the year 2010, when the province said, "There's got to be a better way to do this"—and that became what we now know as the long-term energy plan. This is not something that was thought up last week, last month, or even last year. It had its first try in 2010 and a second try in 2013.

In 2013, for example, it was the biggest, most open and most comprehensive consultation on energy in the Ministry of Energy's history—bar nothing. There were 12 regional sessions held, including roundtable discussions with stakeholders. There were open houses for the public. There were 10 aboriginal sessions held.

Participants sent in close to 8,000 questionnaires. The information gleaned suggested that there is indeed a methodology to effectively listen to people and to be able to take their comments into a plan, a plan that has produced not one but two long-term energy plans, each one building on the foundation of the other.

It's that successful experience with an open, consultative procedure, one that listens effectively to Ontarians from all walks of life, from all regions of the province, that Bill 135 seeks to perpetuate in this Energy Statute Law Amendment Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to comment on Bill 135. Our colleague has brought up a lot of good points. I think early in his chat he talked a fair bit about the challenge that this government has had within the energy sector. I think he referenced the Green Energy Act and really talked a lot about how much we pay—not give away our surplus power; we actually pay the United States and neighbouring jurisdictions like Quebec to take our power, which makes us very unproductive.

The cost is higher to residents, to businesses, to all of our public institutions, which seems, again, to go unnoticed as to how much those are impacting the budget. Then that's taken out of front-line health care services, Mr. Speaker, when your energy bill is doubling or tripling.

He talked about smart meters. He talked, of course, about the gas plant scandal and all of the money wasted there. He brought up the Auditor General's report which, again, has been very critical of the government and where their plan is going.

I just can't chat here today. My colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke brought up the fact earlier that one of the people across the hall—Glengarry–Prescott–Russell—said everything's well in his world. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to hydro in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the majority of people are not thinking that it's well, good or any of those types of adjectives.

At the end of the day, we have a very big concern when a bill comes out like this that's going to give even more power to the energy minister.

It doubly troubles me when the Minister of the Environment comes out and says things like they're going to get rid of nuclear power in 10 years, one of our cleanest, freest, most environmentally sound ways of producing power. So I find it—

Interjection: A strong employer.

Mr. Bill Walker: A very strong employer; lots of great-paying jobs.

It's a huge impact to our economy. So to give more power to a couple of ministers when they do that—they just actually had agreed that they're going to extend and refurbish all of our nuclear plants. To have the minister come out and say, "In 10 years it will be gone," I struggle, Mr. Speaker. There's trust, there's competency, and the track record of the Liberals on energy is not stellar.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to put some comments on the record regarding the presentation given by my colleague from Toronto–Danforth. I always enjoy listening to my colleague, but I must say it was a sobering hour. It really was.

Then it got a bit more comedic when the member from Mississauga–Streetsville said that the Liberal long-term energy plans have been going so swell. I don't think there is anyone in my riding, specifically the people who can't pay their hydro bills, who thinks that anything's going so

swell. Specifically, the people who now got letters in the mail that say, "You know those smart meters you have on your wall? No, they don't work. So we're going to have to read your meters manually again." I don't think they think it's going so swell.

So I'd ask the member from Mississauga–Streetsville if the moving of the gas plants was part of the Liberal long-term energy plan that cost us all \$1 billion. Was that part of the plan?

Installing smart meters for people in rural Ontario: I had someone from Hydro One tell me, "Yes, we thought there were going to be problems because smart meters don't read well with obstacles like rocks and trees." In northern Ontario, who knew? Was that part of the plan?

Again, now that we have this issue coming up with these offshore wind farms that a contract was signed and, oops, the contract was pulled off the table and could cost big dollars to the taxpayers of Ontario: Was that part of the plan?

Then they come out with this law, which is going to give the minister even more power, since the plans are working so well. We have some serious problems with the Liberals' plans on energy in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: It's a privilege and honour to rise in support of Bill 135.

If I might, Speaker, for a moment, with your indulgence, speak not merely as a parliamentarian but also as a physician and how that intersects with the energy sector matrix changes that we've made. I think it is to be remembered that one of the legacies of the McGuinty government was an extraordinary commitment to close coal-fired generation plants in the province of Ontario. I would respectfully say to my eager colleagues who are attempting to interrupt me across the way that I would invite them to visit other parts of the world, whether it's Mumbai, Beijing or Athens or other cities around the world who have not had that same insight and that same energy matrix change.

I can tell you, as a physician, that that cumulative burden of airshed quality derangements—the pollution, essentially, whether it's particulate matter, the smoke, the layers of smoke that people find themselves in towards the evening—has an extraordinary impact on human, animal and environmental health. That is something for which I think we really should celebrate the McGuinty Liberal government and, by extension, of course, the Wynne government. It was a commitment that was made and a commitment that was honoured. Whether it's the removal of smog days, whether it's the effect on respiratory illnesses like asthma and chronic obstructive lung disease and so on, this is a remarkable thing.

The other thing I have to say with respect to my honourable colleagues from the NDP is that your national party wants to conserve its way in terms of energy. Basically they're saying, for example with the Leap Manifesto, however eloquent it is—it basically says to leave all the fossil fuels in the ground. I would like to

know if you folks actually support that. Are you going to conserve your way to energy self-sufficiency in Ontario?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member from Toronto–Danforth can reply.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to respond. I want to thank the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Timiskaming–Cochrane and Etobicoke North for their comments.

I was asked a question by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. Two integrated power supply plants were brought forward, in 2007 and 2011; 2007 was pulled by the Minister of Energy and 2011 wasn't allowed to proceed and, frankly, should have proceeded. I think there may well have been items in that plan that were problematic for the government—that were politically problematic—and thus they yanked it.

I'll go back to 1988-89, the demand-supply plan. This addresses the member from Etobicoke North as well. That plan was one that was subjected to a broad range of inquiry, to an open tribunal. People may need to remember that that plan included a massive increase in nuclear new build in Ontario and far more coal plants. It was the environmental assessment that actually put a stop to that and made it clear that this was not going to go anywhere. If there hadn't been public input at that time, we would have been saddled with possibly tens of billions of dollars more in generating capacity that we couldn't use and, with coal plants, would be choking us today. So I actually think that an open, environmentally focused plan for Ontario makes a lot of sense.

I would say that my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane is quite correct when he says that people in his riding, and increasingly people in ridings around Ontario, ask themselves: "What kind of electricity system do we have—one that impoverishes us rather than one that allows this province to thrive, to flourish, economically and environmentally?"

This bill is one that will be remembered badly for decades to come.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This debate on Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, is an opportunity to remind Ontarians how far we have come in the past 13 years in planning the province's use of energy in all its forms.

Speaker, before I continue, I'd like to say that I am sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands and also the member for Beaches–East York.

It is useful to begin by asking, what was the policy and the process by which Ontario planned its energy production and usage the last time that the official opposition formed government? It's also an easy question to answer, as well. There was no process; there was no policy. There were no means to any end. As a consequence, they got little of value done in the 1990s and the early part of the 2000s.

As the Ontario economy grew during that period, the province's ability to generate electricity actually shrank. Faced with shortages, both looming and present, the PC governments of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves reacted with the usual short-term measures. They cranked up coal-fired electricity generation to almost a quarter of Ontario's total and they bought whatever else they needed from the neighbouring jurisdictions, particularly the United States, much of which was generated by coal. That's a big part of why the greater Toronto area averaged about 50 smog days per year and why more and more kids were coming to our schools with puffers for the allergies and lung conditions that no longer proliferate like they did back then.

That's what this bill is about. Ontario needed a better process. Like most good things that have evolved from basic principles, how Ontario plans energy production and usage was a process that learned to walk before it could run, and that's what Bill 135 is. It is a law that says that Ontario has learned how to plan the production and use of energy in all its forms and to do so in a way that is more precise than before, more participative than before and more thorough than before.

It is a law that says that we will use the better method rather than the old, imprecise, ivory tower, incomplete method. By the way, the opposition in this House wants to keep using the old, imprecise, ivory tower, incomplete method. The old way never produced an Ontario energy plan ever—not even once. So what is this new precise, participative, thorough plan? Here are its key parts.

In doing two long-term energy plans, one in 2010 and one in 2013, the province has refined a responsive, thoughtful, well-consulted energy planning process. Bill 135 will have Ontario keep doing the things that have been proven to be effective. Bill 135 would establish in law a long-term energy planning process that is transparent, efficient and able to respond to changing policy and system needs. The essence of the process Bill 135 proposes has been tried twice. It worked both times, getting better with each usage. Bill 135 is about building on that successful and proven foundation.

As an example, in 2013, the long-term energy plan was the biggest, most open and comprehensive consultation process in the Ministry of Energy's history. The long-term energy plan discussion document was posted on the Environmental Registry. There were 12 regional sessions held, including round-table discussions with stakeholders and open houses for the public. Ten aboriginal sessions were held. This is important because energy transmission projects nearly always pass through aboriginal lands. Participants in 2013 sent in 7,883 questionnaire responses from which clear trends in the thinking of the participants could be seen.

The Ontario Energy Board is often the body that adjudicates such issues as rate change proposals. It is only fitting that they be listened to as well. Their jurisdiction and objectives give them some important insight into the energy planning process. Similarly, the Independent Electricity System Operator, which under-

takes competitive selection and procurement of transmission projects on a continuing basis, is now able to contribute to the process, and so, I might add, may some of the people who, in each subsequent plan, have said, "Deal us in too because we'd like to talk to you."

It has been my pleasure in the last few years to have talked to the Ontario Petroleum Institute, who have said that oil and gas will continue to be a part of our future in Ontario. And by the way, we have oil and gas in Ontario. Shouldn't we talk about oil and gas in the context of our energy future? Ontario actually produces about 1% of the oil and gas that it consumes. Should we talk about whether that proportion is appropriate, should be more, or should be less? I think we should. Such sectors as geothermal have asked us much the same thing. Shouldn't we be talking about the way in which geothermal energy can contribute to our province's future, particularly in regard to the space heating of homes?

This bill, if passed, means that the 2017 and future long-term energy plans could develop high-quality and consistent goals, objectives and plans following some key principles: cost effectiveness, reliability, the optimum use of clean energy, community and aboriginal engagement and a continuing emphasis on conservation and demand management. The outcome and as much of the process as possible is public and visible. That makes for a transparent plan that is much easier for Ontarians to understand and to support.

The 2017 long-term energy plan will look to engage Ontario families and businesses in how to save money on their energy bills. And there is much more to it than replacing incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs. Along with Ontarians, the plan will discuss how to reduce the need to build expensive energy infrastructure and, in so doing, ease price increases for energy of all types.

In that vein, Speaker, I'd just like to go over a few things here on the price of energy.

It's no secret that in December the world signed on to the Paris climate change accord. If a province or state still burns coal to generate electricity, as most of the United States still does, it means they have to turn it off—all of it—and replace it with clean energy. Ontarians have moved to a sustainable greenhouse-gas-free electricity system in the last decade. Ontario's dirty power generation is now all gone for good.

Our neighbouring states in the Great Lakes basin have not yet turned off coal, refurbished their nuclear reactors or moved to sustainable and renewable electricity. Very few generate less than half their electricity from coal and at that, not much less than half. The pressure on US electric utilities is to raise power rates, to build the energy generation and transmission infrastructure that Ontario has already done. Let's put it this way: Ontario bought tomorrow's electricity generation and transmission, paid for it using yesterday's money, and financed it over its lifetime at interest rates of nearly zero. In the Great Lakes basin in the states that adjoin us, they must scramble to buy today's electricity generation

and transmission, pay for it using tomorrow's money, and finance it all at interest rates that have nowhere to go but up.

So to be complete, because some people have mentioned this, British Columbia and parts of the US Pacific Northwest still have the same benefit as do Quebec and Manitoba, the two provinces to our left and to our right: abundant and already-built hydroelectric capacity. They will have lower electricity rates than Ontario and have fewer carbon-emitting sources to turn off.

If we look at what electricity prices are, winter off-peak rates in Mississauga, which I'm quoting, are 8.7 cents per kilowatt hour. Mid-peak rates are 13.2 cents per kilowatt hour, and on-peak rates are 18 cents per kilowatt hour. At our home, about two thirds of our electricity is off-peak power. At home we run the electricity-intensive dryer and dishwasher during the off-peak times and, like most of my neighbours, I've installed compact fluorescent bulbs everywhere I can.

1600

Over the Christmas break, I compared today's electricity prices in the GTA with current rates in the United States from states all around Ontario. The source I used was the U.S. Energy Information Administration, as of December 2015. The US states are behind Ontario in moving to time-of-use billing, although they'll get there. Using the then prevailing 75-cent Canadian dollar, in Canadian cents per kilowatt hour, here is what the states that adjoin us or are close to us are paying for electricity: Connecticut, 25.9 cents per kilowatt hour; Maine, 20.7 cents per kilowatt hour; Massachusetts, 26.1 cents per kilowatt hour; Vermont, 22.9 cents per kilowatt hour; New York, 23.4 cents; Pennsylvania, 18.8 cents; Michigan, 19.4 cents; Ohio, most of whose electricity comes from coal, 16.81 cents; Indiana, nearly all of whose electricity comes from coal, 14.8 cents; Illinois, 15.8 cents; Wisconsin, 18.4 cents; Minnesota, 15.7 cents.

What it means is that low economic growth regions, which have not needed to build new power generation or transmission, may have lower electricity rates than Ontario. However, if you want to live in a growing metropolitan area or a province or a state with an expanding economy which needs a modern electricity infrastructure, then your electricity rates will almost certainly be higher than in Ontario.

So Speaker, to finish up: Along with Ontarians, the plan will discuss how to reduce the need to build expensive energy infrastructure and, in so doing, will ease price increases for energy of all types. Even many Conservatives are now conceding the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and cut air pollution, while contributing to Ontario's climate change strategy objectives that, however grudgingly, they now seem to accept.

One new issue to look at in the 2017 plan is the strong relationship between energy and water. Water is required to create energy, and energy is required to use water. Saving water means saving energy. Saving water also reduces carbon emissions by saving energy otherwise generated to move and treat water. Bill 135 would

establish a common framework for large building owners to know how well they are doing in measuring the consumption of water and in using it intelligently and economically. The bill would also set water efficiency standards for products that consume both energy and water, like dishwashers and washing machines, allowing Ontarians to make the best choices for themselves while shopping for new appliances.

Since the majority of the continent's appliance-makers have a footprint in northwest Mississauga, this means that the water issue is one issue that I will be tracking both closely and personally. Ontario needs to be in line with other jurisdictions in saving consumers money and showing our province's continued leadership in setting efficiency standards. I plan to ensure that Ontario's Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers has multiple opportunities for some fulsome input into how their industry is affected by the proposed regulations.

This is a bill about continuing to do what Ontario has learned to do right and continuing to improve that process as time progresses. There's not much in the bill that's complex. This is a bill that should be passed and proclaimed as quickly as possible. The men and women of this province and the companies in our energy sector need to get to work designing the next version of the long-term energy plan. Ontarians need their work to design, operate and regulate a clean, green, affordable and sustainable system of producing, distributing and consuming energy in all its forms.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It is a wonderful pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 135.

I would like to focus my attention today on my community of Kingston and the Islands. I would like to let everyone in the House know that we have made a commitment to be the most sustainable city in Canada.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Wow.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Yes. We have very strong environmentally minded partners, such as the Kingston General Hospital and the Kingston and Frontenac Housing Corp., which are helping us reach our goal.

Thanks to the leadership and support provided by Utilities Kingston, between 2001 and 2014 our community has saved enough energy to power 5,714 average homes for an entire year. It has also exceeded both provincially mandated energy and demand conservation targets. This incredible achievement has earned Utilities Kingston provincial recognition in electricity conservation leadership. It gives me wonderful pleasure today to give them a shout-out for their efforts.

Through Ontario's saveONenergy retrofit program, KGH projects an annual savings of \$800,000 in total energy costs, money that can be put to work where it matters most: on patient care. The upgrades to heating, cooling, water and electrical systems and to the building itself have been comprehensive. Over 10,000 light fixtures were replaced with more energy-efficient fluorescents and LEDs. HVAC units and pumps were fitted

with new high-efficiency electric motors. Automation systems were redesigned to adjust the building's heating and cooling load more efficiently. New air handling systems were installed. This alone saves Kingston General Hospital more than \$100,000 per year. This is significant savings. In addition, insulation improvements to the heat distribution network and to the windows and doors of older buildings have had a major impact on heating needs and staff and patient comfort.

These initiatives are a shining example of the kind of proactive and forward-thinking approach that has far-reaching positive consequences for the province and for our collective future. Energy efficiency investments and projects help reduce costs for residences and businesses and return savings for many years to come.

Without a doubt, the best return on energy investment in our community and our province lies in conservation. Bill 135 would introduce two new conservation initiatives to help Ontario families, businesses and the province as a whole conserve energy and water to manage costs. We've already heard a little bit about this today, but I wanted to elaborate a little bit more.

The energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiative for large buildings would require property owners to track a building's energy and water use and greenhouse gas emissions over time to allow owners and renters to determine how a building's energy performance is changing and how it compares to similar buildings. Additionally, the water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products and appliances would set water efficiency standards for products that consume both energy and water, like dishwashers and washing machines, allowing Ontarians to make the best choices for themselves when shopping for appliances.

These initiatives would bring Ontario in line with other jurisdictions, saving consumers money and showing our province's continued leadership in setting efficiency standards.

This is why I support Bill 135. The new planning process proposed in Bill 135 would consider conservation as the first resource before building expensive new generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure. This approach will maximize the value and reliability of energy transmission projects while maintaining our government's commitment to energy conservation.

I would like to thank everyone who has spoken to this bill, and especially give a shout-out to my colleague who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy on his efforts at doing his own jurisdictional scan and pointing out what the energy prices are in areas close to Ontario. I think it's extremely important that we have a comprehensive look at competitive pricing, and it's not everything that the opposition is claiming that it is.

Thank you so much for listening today. I support Bill 135.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I listened intently to the remarks by the members for Mississauga–Streetsville and

Kingston and the Islands. They went on about energy pricing and they complained that the States are higher than us in different jurisdictions. I wonder how they explain that to a constituent of mine who showed me his hydro bill. He had zero usage for hydro and it cost him 95 bucks. How is that explained? He was at his cottage and he shut all the power off, and it cost him \$95 to get a bill that said that he didn't owe anything for electricity. Tell me how that seems fair. I don't think it is. What would you cost out for a kilowatt of power that way? I don't know—\$100 a kilowatt? Is that what it works out to—or for no kilowatts. He was very upset.

There is also a war vet in my riding. He's 93 years old. He lives by himself. His wife is in a home. He shut the house off. He just has a couple of rooms in his house that he heats, and he says, "I'm getting real close to not being able to pay this hydro bill." It's getting that serious with this war vet.

To stand there and say that they've had a long-term energy policy—no. Their long-term energy policy goes from year to year. When they get into trouble with all these projects, then they've got to change something. Just ask the people out in rural Ontario how impressed they are with the wind turbine farms that they don't want, and yet they keep approving these things.

I would suggest that we've never had a long-term energy policy in the last few years because, when they get into trouble with politics, they suddenly change things. This bill will give the energy minister too much power to do as he wants. So that's certainly one reason we don't support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, an opportunity to speak on Bill 135: I did listen intently to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and the member from Kingston and the Islands, and their comments showed one of the problems with this bill.

They're talking about conserving water in dishwashers and hot water, which is fine, but it has really nothing to do with the gist of this bill because there are two parts of this bill. There's the good part that you want to talk about—energy conservation regarding water—and then there's where they're stripping all the power away from the OEB and others and giving more power to the minister on, basically, hydro plans. So it's kind of, "Watch what we're doing with water, and let's not talk about what we're doing with electricity."

Even on the water thing, I'd like to bring an agricultural point to this. Who is really worried about this on the agriculture side are the greenhouse operators. The greenhouse operators are worried about the water thing because you should look at how much production you're getting out of each building as compared to how much water and energy you're using as compared to the square footage. Greenhouse A may be vastly more productive using a bit more energy than greenhouse B, which is producing a lot less. We don't see anywhere where that's measured.

Another thing is that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville concentrated on his riding about the energy costs. I compliment him for that. I'll concentrate on mine, where we pay huge delivery fees because we have low-density delivery fees. The member from Perth–Wellington alluded to that as well. That's one of the big issues in rural Ontario.

One more way in how northern Ontario is treated differently: In northern Ontario, they are still building solar farms on the best land in the province. That's not allowed in southern Ontario. But in northern Ontario: "Keep on building." That has to be stopped.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I want to speak to just one part of the bill, and that's the consultation process and, in particular, the consultation process with the First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities.

It was very important to engage our indigenous partners in this issue. There were 10 indigenous engagement sessions and meetings where there were a total of 275 participants representing some 100 First Nation and Métis communities and other organizations.

One of the pillars of Ontario's approach to indigenous policy is economic development. Participation by First Nation and Métis communities in the energy sector is one way the government is enabling this kind of economic development. The LTEP process provides an opportunity to understand First Nation and Métis community interests and needs in order to outline a clear vision for involving our indigenous communities in the energy sector. The LTEP incorporates the feedback they received from the most comprehensive consultation process ever undertaken by the ministry. Through the LTEP, Ontario is encouraging and supporting the participation of both First Nation and Métis communities in a new generation of transmission projects and in conservation and community energy initiatives.

It is very important, Speaker, that we engage our First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities in this exercise. Energy, especially in the Far North, has always been a challenge for First Nations, hence it's important that we engage them in this planning process. We have done that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to rise and offer comments to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and also Kingston and the Islands.

I just want to start off by asking the member from Mississauga–Streetsville—he talked a lot about planning and he talked at some point in there about nuclear, so I want to question him why his Minister of the Environment would come out and suggest that nuclear is going to be gone. It's emissions-free, very cost-effective, provides great jobs and has a huge impact on our economy. Just a month or so ago the Minister of Energy came out and actually suggested they were going to refurb all the units and that would extend their lifecycle—certainly in the Bruce Power plant—to 2064.

You've got an industry that's going to create a lot of jobs and a lot of economic opportunity, and Lord knows we need it in this province because they've driven most of our manufacturing sector out. So I find it very strange that the Minister of the Environment would stand up publicly and say that we're going to get rid of nuclear in the next 10 years. I wonder what the nuclear people who came to this government and thought they had a good deal and a good agreement thought of that coming out, and why that hasn't been unequivocally retracted by the minister at this point.

It's a little bit confusing for the public in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. They were told, "Conserve and this will all be better for us. It's going to be a wonderful thing that you're doing." Yet they conserved and their bills got higher. They conserved—they did what the Liberals asked—and their bills still got higher. Those who spent more and actually used the energy—they were telling you to use energy—their bills got higher, Mr. Speaker.

It baffles me when a bill like Bill 135 is going to give even more power to an energy minister who has doubled the rates over the last number of years. And we're told they're going to go up another 50% for our businesses, for those at home who can't afford it now, for those independent people, our seniors on fixed incomes, and public institutions like our hospitals that are actually now sadly firing nurses because of this government's mismanagement because they don't have enough money to pay their exorbitant hydro bills.

This is very concerning to me, Mr. Speaker. We'll have to debate it more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Mississauga-Streetsville can reply.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I appreciated the comments of the members from Perth-Wellington, Timiskaming-Cochrane, Willowdale and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

To my colleague from Perth-Wellington: I'm not sure if his remarks suggest that his cellphone or telephone bill would be zero if he goes away on vacation and doesn't use the phone, or if his cable bill would be zero if he were to go away and not watch television. Perhaps he could clear that up for me.

My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane, perhaps he did not hear the part of my remarks in which I described how such entities as the Ontario Energy Board are thus more empowered through Bill 135.

My colleague from Willowdale grasps how a long-term energy planning process works when it involves everyone's opinions, including Ontario's First Nations and Métis communities.

To my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, let's be very clear about it: Ontario will refurbish the remaining six of the eight reactors at Bruce. Two of those reactors have already been refurbished. All eight reactors at Bruce will remain refurbished in brand new condition.

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All four reactors at Darlington will be refurbished. The four at Darlington will go first, followed by the

remaining six at Bruce. In order to continue to supply power during the refurbishment period, the life of the remaining six operating Pickering reactors will be extended. This preserves some 8,000 megawatts of clean, green, economical, sustainable electricity for longer than almost anyone in this House is likely to remain alive.

Let there be no doubt about it: Ontario needs its nuclear reactors. Ontario is proud of its Candu technology.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to recognize the member for Windsor-Tecumseh on a point of order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A point of order, yes, Speaker. Thank you very much. I'd like to recognize and welcome the tour group up in the members' east gallery. I just bumped into them down the hall. I had a short geography lesson about Detroit being due south of Windsor—or due north, I'm sorry, due north of Windsor. I got my geography all mixed up already. Because they were saying, "our American neighbours to the south," but in Windsor's case, they're actually due north. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to offer some comment on Bill 135 today. We're already at third reading. Again, we have another bill that has gone through the legislative process of first reading, second reading and committee, and again this government did not accept a single amendment put forward by the opposition parties. Thirty-four amendments were proposed, after listening to deputations of stakeholders, people who had concerns with this bill, who thought they could improve the legislation, which is how the democratic process should be working. Unfortunately, zero amendments were proposed, so obviously this government doesn't think that, once they come out with the bill, anyone could ever improve the legislation they put forward.

It's quite unfortunate, considering this bill was first read on October 28. We're dealing with a number of months to receive input and bring up some ideas that could enhance or strengthen the bill. Now, I don't expect all of the opposition amendments to be accepted, but you would think, somewhere out there, when stakeholders come forward to discuss the legislation, that some ideas had come forward that would have strengthened the legislation and made it more acceptable to Ontarians across the province.

I'd like to just discuss some of the concerns that were raised with Bill 135 over the many months of debate. I know that this bill will pass, considering the government has a majority, and their wanting to concentrate power into the Ministry of Energy. Unfortunately, with this government's history of energy planning, that's a concern—a concern with the fact that this government's energy minister says one thing and does another.

I only have to bring forward Dutton Dunwich in my riding. Recently, a company was awarded wind turbines in their municipality. Dutton Dunwich was the first

municipality in the province of Ontario to hold a referendum on whether or not they wanted wind turbines within the municipality: 84% of the respondents in the community said no, they did not want wind turbines. This minister had spoken publicly that they would start to listen to the voice of municipalities, that they would work with municipalities to ensure that those that didn't want turbines would not get them.

It's unfortunate, because on the east side of my riding is Malahide township. Malahide township was a willing host. Their council decided to support wind turbines and wanted to bring them into the area, but they didn't get the contract. Dutton Dunwich didn't want the wind turbines. They met with the ministry for the last year and a half telling them, "We don't want the wind turbines. We just want to let you know," and sat down and had many discussions with them. They got the contract and Malahide, of course, didn't get the contract but wanted the turbines.

It's a concern, the fact they're going to concentrate and give this minister more control and say over decisions on our energy planning. We have a minister who doesn't listen to constituents outside of his riding. That's a concern, especially for rural Ontario. This government has had a history of not listening to rural Ontario when it comes to certain issues, and in particular, about the wind turbines. I've seen it across the province. You've probably talked to the members from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Huron-Bruce or Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. You see, when the wind turbines move in, the community starts to fight amongst themselves.

Dutton Dunwich, before this wind turbine project came forward, I would say was a unified, strong municipality—unbelievable the contributions each person has made to the community. Now, there's shoving and pushing matches and arguments within the community. Tall Tales, which is a great café in Wallacetown just out on the edge of Dutton—makes the best pies, though. I've just got to put an aside there that they're probably the best pies I've ever tasted. They actually have people arguing and almost coming to blows in the café over a wind turbine project which is not wanted or needed in the area. So that's a huge concern that they'd be increasing this minister's powers.

What's more frightening is the minister can now ignore the advice from the people at the IESO and the Ontario Energy Board. These are people whose job is to study certain projects wanting to go forward and to let the government know when it's a bad idea to head down that route. Now, through this legislation, the Minister of Energy doesn't even have to listen to the professionals at these organizations when they come forward. It's like the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said: The minister has become a supreme being in which he can do what he wants to do whenever he wants to and he's the only decision-maker.

What's concerning is that this is a government that will bring forth a piece of legislation—this isn't the first one, by the way; this probably has been pretty consistent

across the board—not listening to consultations and amendments. Now, we're going to give the minister the power to go further and no longer have to consult with anyone. We've seen this act before. They might say, "Oh, we're going to reach out and talk to a few people," but as we saw with the budget this past year, when the government brought out the budget before the pre-budget consultations were done with the committee at the Legislature—they had yet to write their final report and submit it to the government and the budget was already printed and ready to roll.

So it's—I have a dry throat today. Excuse me. I don't like clearing my throat; it sounds bad on the microphone. Sorry.

So what is concerning is the future of energy policy in this province with regard to the centralization of power into the ministry. If you're not listening to the professionals, you're not listening to the opposition and you're not listening to stakeholders, you're bound to make a mistake down the road. The oversight that is needed by these organizations ensures the government stays in place.

Another concern is the home energy audit process that will be coming forward. Mandatory home energy audits were first debated back in 2009, when our then-critic—the same critic we had in 2009 as we do today, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—fought against them with the Green Energy Act. Unfortunately, six years—or even more, seven years later—they're back. What that does is—it's a debate that has been argued before and, again, they bring it forward. Through this bill, I think the confidence of the people of the province with regard to energy is going to be further eroded.

We have high energy rates. I know the government will argue that we don't. The Minister of Finance will even tell you in question period that they're coming down, even though we just had a rate increase on May 1. But listening to constituents who come into the office and the fact that they come—usually January and February would be the tougher months, when they're trying to heat their homes. They can't pay their bills and our office—and I'm sure most offices here—have to try to work on their behalf to try to keep the heat going and make sure they have payment plans so that they are able to afford food or other quality-of-living items that they may need. When you have issues like that, you need to ensure the long-term energy plan is done right and correctly so that people can try to ensure that they have a plan ahead in order to afford their energy rates. Unfortunately, this government changes their long-term energy plan quite often because I don't believe they look beyond the next year or so before making it.

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It's quite a concern that this government is going to take away the consultation or the voice of reason that they need to bounce ideas off of with this bill. I'm pretty sure that, legislatively, they think they're heading down the right way so they have more control, but we, the opposition and the people of my riding, need to ensure

that there's accountability and transparency through all of government. The fact that you will be creating a Minister of Energy with enormous powers and the ability not to listen to anyone is quite a concern down the road.

I think the best friend of many of the MPPs here was the Ombudsman for hydro costs in this Legislature. He was somebody whom we could call on to help push the government when Hydro One was being unfair to our constituents. This government legislated his oversight away in the past budget and now people do not have that person to contact for help to deal with the government over erroneous bills.

It was only a few years ago that I brought forward a constituent of mine whose farm operation was billed \$260,000 for one month. Obviously it was a mistake, but we had to get the Ombudsman involved. We had to call Hydro. I had to talk to the CEO at the time. A person shouldn't have to go through that with regard to a billing problem. Most private corporations, if they mess up the billing, fix it pretty quickly because you can lose that customer. However, Hydro One, with their monopoly, doesn't really have to act. Previously, it didn't act. It was shaming them with the Ombudsman, which brought out the changes now, with the fact that the Ombudsman is now gone from overseeing Hydro One. We're going to have a Minister of Energy with complete control and say over our energy policies. People are probably going to suffer because there's no one there for the people anymore with regard to energy policy.

To top it off, the government has sold a good stake of Hydro One, against the wishes of the people of Ontario. It mimics what happened in Dutton Dunwich, when 84% of the people of Dutton Dunwich voted against wind turbines. I would think that approximately the same amount of people are against the sale of Hydro One, which, again, this government has moved forward on.

The rates have gone up on May 1. Rural Ontario is against the selling of Hydro One and against wind turbines coming into their areas without their agreeing, without their say-so. Unfortunately, energy prices are going to increase. The government's response to all this is to remove the professionals to consult them on proper planning going forward and to let cabinet decide what is going to happen with their energy programs. To me, that's quite concerning. I think that even on the back-bench of the government side, it would be concerning, because they're going to have to answer for the cabinet's decisions on how the energy processes are going forward.

As we've seen with the Green Energy Act, hydro rates have skyrocketed, businesses have left the province and we're hearing stories of people being unable to afford their energy costs. The cost of living in this province has skyrocketed under this government in the last 15 years, and unfortunately, people are doing without or else leaving the province now.

I was hopeful, when this bill came out, that after this debate and discussions with stakeholders there would be a few amendments to ensure there was some sort of power left with the OEB and IESO and that people would

be able to have a chance that some long-term energy plan would come forward from this government. Unfortunately, we didn't get that. Unfortunately, businesses in my riding cannot expect energy rates to level off; they can see the rates continuing to skyrocket upwards. Unfortunately, the people in Dutton Dunwich will be getting their wind turbines, and unfortunately, the people of Malahide—maybe they'll get the next round; they'll get the turbines.

Unfortunately, when this government says that they are going to listen to municipalities with regard to energy policy and don't—we now are having a bill to strengthen the ministry, and I'm sure they'll say on the other side that he's going to listen and he's going to consult with people. We know that this minister is not going to do so, and it's a real concern.

When we bring forth legislation—and we've seen mistakes made previously from other governments with regard to improper oversight or giving too much power to one person or organization—we see from time to time, again, that errors will occur. At the end of the day, it costs taxpayers money, it costs ratepayers money, and we'd have to come together with a whole new legislation in order to fix the problems brought forward. Maybe down the road in two years' time or three years' time we'll be back discussing how we can fix this situation with energy pricing in Ontario, but we're not quite there yet. We're going to continue to see higher energy rates as we progress forward.

Mr. Speaker, one more note here before I end my talk because—I lost my page here.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Just wing it.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Do you want me to just wing it?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Just tell us what's in your heart.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: There's so much in my heart to speak.

Anyway, I'm glad the government is actually listening to what I'm saying here. I thought you were busy way down there. But I do have to say I'm glad they're here listening. We're hoping, now that I've got their ear, that maybe we can work together and try to postpone the Dutton Dunwich wind turbines that are coming our way.

I know the President of the Treasury Board is here. I always like seeing her at the Legislature. She had a nice, new haircut just a few weeks ago. It was good to see her.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No hair jokes.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Did you get a haircut too?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: No. I need to get a haircut.

Anyway, I'm off track, Mr. Speaker. I think I need to get back on track.

Hopefully, as we commence further with this third reading—and I'm sure this bill will pass and be enacted—we can take a look at how we're going to fix this bill going forward, because I'm fearful for the long-term energy plan that I'm sure will be the third or fourth one in the third or fourth year that we're still going to see energy rates rise. We're going to see power going to the Minister of Energy. We're going to see less consultation with the people of Ontario.

My riding needs some economic development. One of the factors that lay in the way is energy costs. We hope to get that under control. We've lost 6,000 manufacturing jobs in the riding since 2008. I think we can do better as a community with regard to drawing larger businesses to the area. We have quite a few small start-ups, but some larger employers would be great. I'm sure our Formet plant in St. Thomas would love to have lower or reasonable energy rates.

I've spoken to the owner of Wendy's and Boston Pizza, and their energy rates are through the roof. Remember MP Joe Preston, who's retired? That's his place. He has come and talked to me quite often about his energy rates. Now that he's retired and back in private life, he's taken a look at his bills over the last 10 years. It's a small business and he employs quite a few people, but he's having to deal with the higher rates, which does impede production growth.

On the health care side, I'm hearing from hospitals. Their energy rates are starting to grow. With the freezing of the budgets, I know the government has chipped in a little bit, but that money has got to come from somewhere in order to pay for these energy rates. I'd rather they not come out of the money allocated for health care. It's unfortunate that those decisions are going to have to be made down the road. We're hoping for a better plan for Ontarians that we're not receiving right now.

I would like to end my comments and listen to the questions and comments from the members of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for his comments.

Speaker, I can go back a few years, and I can remember on Stoney Creek city council—it was the time that the Conservative government decided to deregulate Hydro. That was the beginning of the fiasco that has transpired in the last few years. Once you privatize or deregulate, then you run into problems. Now they've decided, in their infinite wisdom, to sell off Hydro, which is a big mistake. I get it from the population and I get it from businesses.

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Then I thought about this, Speaker. It went to committee, and at committee, several people of expertise in the field made presentations to the committee from various parts of our society. Engineers, hydroelectricity experts and people who worked on some of the major projects in Niagara Falls made presentations to the committee. The amazing part about that: Not one—not one—amendment was accepted by the government. That's pretty scary.

Now, I don't know if the government has expertise in electricity—I guess they do, and the minister is an expert—but usually, when I want to learn anything, I go to the people in the trenches. I don't go to people on Bay Street or other places to learn what you really want to know about the electrical system and grid in our province. When you have all the experts come forward

and warn you about the pitfalls and you don't take the warnings, you don't listen and you go ahead with your agenda, that's pretty arrogant—pretty scary. I think you're going to find, 10 years down the road, that we're going to be in big trouble financially because of this move. It's a sad state of affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: My colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London mentioned the impact of energy on jobs. Let's just talk about jobs.

Ontario's net employment gains—gains—now exceed some 600,000 new jobs; in other words, more than we lost. Overwhelmingly, those are high-wage, full-time and high-skill positions. That meant that the money that the province borrowed during the recession actually did produce the result that it intended.

As well, some of Ontario's fundamental ratios, by which people assess how good a credit risk you are—Ontario's net-debt-to-GDP ratio is 38.5% now, 26% pre-recession; and our accumulated deficit-to-GDP ratio is 25.9% now, 17.6% pre-recession. They've all been coming down for the past three years, and all of them are headed back to their pre-recession levels. That makes us, by comparison, about the only developed economy to see those key ratios coming down and heading back to their pre-recession levels. If you're looking at those ratios in every other developed country, they're all going up.

There's something that Ontario is doing that's attracting good companies, keeping good companies, bringing on good jobs and keeping high-wage, high-skill, high-value employment right here in the province of Ontario. The fastest-growing of those sectors is manufacturing, so manufacturing in Ontario is doing well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak briefly to Bill 135 and comment on the speech from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

But of course, I would like to point out that the debt-to-GDP ratio for the province of Ontario when the Liberals came into power was 27% and it's now pretty much 40%. That seems to me to be trending the wrong way. Of course, we know the debt of the province has doubled—doubled—under this government, so it's nothing to be very proud of, that's for sure.

Now, this Bill 135 is giving more power to the Minister of Energy. I would say that is also heading in the wrong direction. We've seen, with this government, unprecedented political meddling in the electricity sector. It has been disastrous. We have some of the highest electricity prices anywhere and continuing increases. Just May 1, we had another increase. You just need to talk to some of your constituents and you certainly will find out how they feel about it, whether you go into Parry Sound and you go to the butcher and you talk to Murray Orr there—and that's usually what he wants to talk to you about: his monthly electric bill, which has gone up dramatically—or small restaurants which really don't

have a choice about shifting when they use power. They have coolers and equipment that just has to run to keep the food cool, and they don't have a choice in managing their electricity.

Last week, when I arrived at the Parry Sound municipal meeting and talked to some seniors before the meeting, the first thing they talked to me about was electricity. Without me bringing it up, they brought up electricity rates and how high they are and how hard it is to pay their bills.

Or listen to the Auditor General who says that in the green energy area we've spent an additional \$9.2 billion and, overall, an extra \$37 billion. The numbers are so big that it's hard to conceive of: from 2006 to 2014, an extra \$37 billion that's on everyone's electricity bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: While New Democrats share some of the concerns expressed by the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London—I mean, if this government had a strong record on the energy file, perhaps our concerns wouldn't be validated.

However, one has only to read multiple editorials and news coverage about this government. One was from the *Globe and Mail* from December 3, 2015, when the AG's report first came out. It reads as this: "On Wednesday, Ontario's Auditor General announced that, between 2006 and 2014, thanks to incompetence and mismanagement on the part of the province's Liberal government, Ontarians overpaid for electricity to the tune of \$37 billion. And over the next 18 years, consumers will be overpaying to the tune of another \$133 billion."

Now, the Minister of Energy, of course, we know how he feels. He thinks that the Auditor General got it wrong because it's so complex. However, that Auditor General ran Manitoba Hydro for almost 10 years.

The editorial goes on: "The inflated costs cover both consumers and business, so some of that shows up not on the consumer's bill, but on the tab of the province's businesses, which then pass those costs on to customers."

"Why is Ontario's electricity so costly? Because the Ontario government has for the past decade been running the province's power sector with something approaching the skill of Soviet commissars. It has politicized decision-making, taking it out of the hands of independent experts. It deliberately broke the system, creating huge new costs without benefits. And it doesn't seem to know how to fix it, or want to."

I guarantee you that government Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, does not fix the problem. It doubles down on the incompetence of this government on the energy file, and we all end up paying the price.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's four questions and comments. The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London can reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I want to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for your points—very well-spoken. Unfortunately, the government didn't want to listen to the opposition benches during this process for this bill.

Mr. Norm Miller: What about Mississauga–Streetsville?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Mississauga–Streetsville: Thank you very much for your comments, as well. You can throw out percentages that you like, but the fact remains that we're \$300 billion in debt now from this government; approximately \$22,000 per person. It's going to be a lot harder. We're at \$12 billion in interest payments a month, and interest rates move one way or another. It's going to be increasing—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No, no, no. I think you mean per year.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Oh, sorry; per year. Thank you, Treasury Board. I knew that you'd be on top of this.

So it's even better than that. This must have been a goal to reach. It's \$1 billion a month in interest payments, \$12 billion a year. That's not any better than what I said, other than the numbers, but that's \$12 billion out of the system. I could work for the government. I could spin this to make it sound good.

Anyway, \$12 billion a year is quite unfortunate. It's the third-highest ministry: health, education and then interest payments—the amount of money you think that could be spent in other ministries to deal with our situations.

Parry Sound–Muskoka: great rebuttal, for bringing out your thoughts and the fact that you could talk about local issues that this government doesn't seem to understand. When you hear from us on this side of the benches, when we bring our ideas forward, it's coming from the constituents who live in our ridings and the concerns they're bringing forward. They're truly heartfelt and they are ideas that we think need to be dealt with.

1650

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed in the speech today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to correct my record, Speaker, from last Thursday. In my remarks concerning the government program, the \$100 million that was administered by Union Gas and Enbridge on energy retrofits, I used an example of converting oil to propane, that that would be less carbon, and it was pointed out to me that there is a debate on that. So I'm still very concerned about the program, but I didn't use a very good—because oil actually might, per BTU, have less carbon than propane.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate? The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Applause.

Mr. Paul Miller: I hope you're clapping at the end of it.

I'm pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several

regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning.

This bill comes from the very same Liberal government that has brought in the largest single hydro increase in Ontario's history. Hundreds of municipalities have passed resolutions against the privatization of Hydro One; the government has ignored their calls. The Auditor General released a report that tore the government's energy policy apart. It highlighted the many failures of process that led to this government's bad decisions—decisions that have unnecessarily cost Ontario residents tens of billions of dollars and will continue to do so. Instead of being humbled by the report, instead of taking on board its recommendations and instead of learning from past mistakes, the government is doubling down.

This piece of legislation is very important: It is, in one sense, the government's response to the Auditor General. You may recall that the Minister of Energy showed little respect to the Auditor General after a previous critical report was issued in December 2014. Scathing reports from the Auditor General on energy policy are, at this stage, an annual event. The minister belittled the Auditor General's knowledge of the energy sector, although we quickly learned that her knowledge and experience of the hydro sector is far greater than his. This legislation is a response in the same spirit as the minister's was. It ignores the Auditor General's recommendations. It sets in stone the same flawed policy-making process that has led to so many bad energy policy decisions by this government and past governments. It does not improve transparency; it does not improve accountability; in fact, it does the opposite.

With Bill 135, the government has abandoned once and for all the vision of an independent and transparent long-term energy plan and approval process that had been established in 2004. For the third time in just a year, the Liberal government is using what it brands a progressive policy to sneak in changes that upend electricity policy in this province without public review and with unknown and uncertain impacts. Bill 135 regulates the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator to mere arms of the government. It removes their planning and approval authority. It reduces these previously independent bodies to instruments of the minister, with little function other than implementing the government's policy-driven and evidence-free plans. By removing the independence of the OEB and the IESO, it will now be even easier for powerful private interests to lobby the government to approve expensive and risky energy projects without being subject to tough, independent public scrutiny. The harsh reality is, however, that this bill is in many ways simply copper-fastening the poor practices of this government in legislation. It already evades the checks and balances in existing legislation and regulations.

Whenever oversight, scrutiny and evidence are inconvenient to this government's energy agenda, it finds a way to avoid them. Not a single integrated power system plan has ever been approved in Ontario despite the

existing law that mandates one be approved and updated every three years. When it came to the privatization of Hydro One, one of the most consequential energy policy decisions ever taken by a government in this province, the government bulldozed through every check and balance. It refused to submit its privatization plan to the Ontario Energy Board for review. It refused even to release the analyses that were prepared for the Ed Clark panel, even though the process leading to the privatization decision was supposed to be transparent, professional and independently validated.

Speaker, at every opportunity the Premier and her ministers claim, hand on heart, to be committed to transparency and accountability. But with every action, we see the opposite, especially when it comes to energy policies. When words and actions are moving in opposite directions, we have a real crisis in a democratic government.

If the Ontario Energy Board is supposed to protect Ontarians from an increase in rates demanded by a privatized Hydro One, then why is this government moving to yet again undermine the OEB's independence and regulatory authority? How will the Ontario Energy Board protect us from the policies of this government and the effects of its policies if it is reduced to a mere arm of and a rubber stamp for the government and specifically the Minister of Energy, if it becomes but an instrument of the ministry it is supposed to, in effect, protect us from?

In 2006 the government delegated to the OEB the role of implementing ministerial directives related to the smart metering initiative, with no independent public scrutiny permitted. Thanks to the lack of oversight and scrutiny, Ontarians were left holding a \$2-billion boondoggle. Now the government has proposed to do the same thing with the entire electricity transmission sector, a sector that, thanks to this government, is now owned by private investors who have been promised billions of dollars' worth of expansion opportunities. This government is opening the door to even bigger boondoggles.

Let me shine some light on the government's arrogance and lack of accountability when it comes to pushing this legislation through—never mind making consequential decisions, but using the powers this legislation provides. This bill is 14 pages long. Fourteen groups gave oral presentations to the Standing Committee on General Government about this bill. Dozens of amendments were offered, yet this bill was reported back for third reading without one amendment. This government shot down every amendment. Presumably, the government members disagreed not only with all reasoned opposition to the bill but with every constructed proposal offered to the government.

Do they really believe that this bill is perfect, that it cannot be bettered, that it is the summit, the peak, of legislative accomplishment? Have this government and its ministers found Mount Everest, perhaps? Well, any of us outside the bubble have a very different opinion. The bar is so low that the construction of a molehill rather than a mountain would be this minister's least damaging

achievement in office. If this bill resembles any natural wonder, it is most akin to the Grand Canyon because that's where the government and this ministry are taking us with their hydro policies and lack of transparency.

The arrogance is astonishing, but in no way is it a surprise. We have become used to it around here. This government shows no respect to this Legislature, to its members or to the legislative process. Committees have become just rubber stamps. The government shows no respect to interested citizens and parties who take time out of their lives to conduct research and make oral presentations or written submissions to the committee that examine government bills. This government does nothing other than waste their time and energy.

I intend to devote much of my time today to bringing to the attention of this House the informed comments and reasonable contributions of a few of the witnesses who spoke to the bill at committee because, as has sadly become standard operating procedure in this Legislature, the government paid absolutely no heed to them at the time. Let their insights illuminate our discussions to date.

The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers appeared before the committee and suggested improvements to Bill 135. The society is the voice of Ontario's engineering profession. Although supportive of many aspects of the legislation, it highlighted that with this bill, if passed, energy decisions will be made by the Minister of Energy rather than by the technical experts at the Independent Electricity System Operator. The OSPE also warned against removing the requirement for an integrated power system plan for the sector, as this bill does. They believe that the IESO should remain as the developer of integrated power system plans in our province. Allow me to quote directly:

"Regional planning, conservation and demand management are all things that are very important to Ontario's economy. We believe that the minister should remain as the approver of the IESO's plan as it is submitted to the Ontario Energy Board, and that the plan should be subject to the board's hearing processes."

Furthermore, the OSPE is concerned that the government is reducing the bidding process to simply a low-cost bid system rather than a qualifications-based selection process. Relying solely on the lowest bid and taking no account of quality has cost this province dearly in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Did the government listen to the professional engineers and their many amendments to incorporate in its input? It did not.

Mr. Tom Adams, who has been an energy analyst for almost 30 years, was the second witness to the committee. He warned that Bill 135 will eliminate the last remnant of independence of both the IESO and the Ontario Energy Board, effectively making them extensions of the Ministry of Energy rather than independent sources of expertise and checks on government overreach and politicization of energy systems.

1700

The government has claimed that Bill 135 will solve the failures of governance identified by the Auditor

General in her most recent and scathing report on the province's energy system. Mr. Adams argues the contrary. He believes that instead of correcting these failures of governance, Bill 135 will only make it worse.

Our party's energy critic, the member for Toronto-Danforth, asked Mr. Adams in committee whether this bill would prevent problems like the gas plant scandal or the failed investment in smart meters. Mr. Adams's response was that this legislation would actually remove some of the checks and balances that exist within an already-flawed system.

I'll quote Mr. Adams directly, since it doesn't appear that the government members are paying much attention to this: "The original design of initially the OPA and now the IESO's power system planning function anticipated that those power plans would be produced by the professionals and then subject to public review. That provides multiple levels of professional oversight and public participation. All of that is gone under the provisions of Bill 135."

Speaker, you won't be surprised also to learn that the government made no amendments to Bill 135 in response to Mr. Adams's critical comments.

The third committee witness was Mr. Mark Winfield, co-chair of the Sustainable Energy Initiative in the faculty of environmental studies of York University. Mr. Winfield also spoke in strong opposition to the power grab that Bill 135 represents: "This proposal is bad in terms of energy policy, it's bad in terms of economic policy, it's bad in terms of environmental policy and it is also politically unwise. It seems the government hasn't learned very much from the gas plant cancellation adventure." They haven't learned much, for sure.

Mr. Winfield made the very important observation that electricity system plans are the largest single net infrastructure investments made by the province of Ontario. And yet, the government is advancing legislation that would mean that the largest infrastructure investments of all would be subject to no meaningful external review.

I quote again: The "legislation abandons the notion of rational planning in the electricity system. The long-term design and management of the system would be effectively treated as a political matter."

Any Ontarian listening to this should be alarmed at this. Look at the results of 13 years of Liberal political interference in the energy sector. They have been nothing short of disastrous for the everyday hard-working people of this province. They've been a crushing burden for people on fixed incomes, particularly seniors.

My own hydro bill—I opened it up the other day and there was more for transmission storage and other costs than my actual use. Who does that? Where in the world do you get charged more for it just sitting there? You're not even using it. I didn't use it, but I'm paying for something they screwed up—unbelievable.

This Liberal government's energy policies have chased business out of the province. I can speak for Hamilton. What's gone: US Steel; Procter and Gamble; Case; John Inglis; American Can; Continental Can—all

have left. Westinghouse—gone. Some 20,000 good manufacturing jobs in Hamilton in the last 25 years have gone. That's a good chunk of our population, but this government says, "We've created 300,000 new jobs." Well, it wasn't in Hamilton, I'll tell you that much.

The Auditor General has shown that the Liberal policies have imposed tens of billions of dollars of unnecessary costs on both energy consumers and taxpayers in this province.

You know what, Speaker? If they hadn't blown the \$3 billion dollars on those boondoggles—I won't go through the list because they've heard it a hundred times; \$4.6 billion dollars they blew—well, I guess they wouldn't have had to sell Hydro. I guess they could have done a lot of other things for front-line care, a lot of other things they could have done with that money that got blown by bad decisions, trying to save seats, all the things they did in the last few years. Speaker, \$4.6 billion dollars? That goes a long way—at least, it would in Hamilton.

Instead of drawing back from their disastrous policies, the government is doubling down now. Instead of listening to criticism, the government is seeking to eliminate it. This bill will further politicize the energy system of this province and remove the last checks and balances, or, in the mind of this government, the last obstacles to the Minister of Energy's divine will.

Mr. Winfield sounded the alarm in committee, but instead of calling in the emergency services, the government cut the power to the bell so he couldn't ring the bell. No amendments to reflect his warnings were accepted.

The final witness on the first day of hearings was Mr. Scott Travers from the Society of Energy Professionals. This guy should know what he's talking about. The society represents more than 7,000 professional employees who work throughout Ontario's electricity system for employers who include Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One, the Ontario Energy Board and the Electrical Safety Authority, among many others. So, Speaker, in a rational discussion of energy policy and legislation in this province, the society's expert opinion should carry significant weight, I would assume. I think you know where I'm going with this, Speaker.

The Society of Energy Professionals was highly critical of Bill 135, but most especially of the concentration of powers in the minister's office and the removal of planning processes that provided for public hearings and allowed for open participation by industry stakeholders, consumer and ratepayer representatives, community and specific interest groups and independent experts, as well as members of the general public.

The society warned that Bill 135 enshrines in legislation the deeply flawed practices of the last few years, which have seen the government circumvent the proper planning process, leading to nightmares such as the gas plant scandals, the sell-off of Hydro One and tens of billions of dollars in unnecessary cost to Ontario's energy consumers and taxpayers.

To quote Mr. Travers, "The society believes that the proposed alterations to the planning process would

severely hamper the political independence and effectiveness of the electricity system planning process and oversight in a way detrimental to the public good.

"In essence, Bill 135 seeks to enshrine in legislation a planning process which has been found severely wanting. It is the opinion of the society that the effect of Bill 135, as written, is inherently incompatible with complying with system planning best practices and with the recommendation of the Auditor General's report with respect to the system planning process." Furthermore, Mr. Travers stated that "the proposed process lacks transparency, accountability and non-partisan oversight."

After all that has happened, after the Auditor General tore the government's energy policy to shreds, how is it that we find ourselves debating legislation that will enable the government to repeat these policy mistakes over and over again, without any accountability, without any checks and balances, without any public or expert input to apply the brakes, or at least sound the alarm?

Did this government heed the warnings of the Society of Energy Professionals? Did it suggest or accept any amendments to allay their concerns? It did not.

Those are just a few of the witnesses who criticized this bill in committee and who said that it should be either discarded or significantly amended. But, as I said, the bill was reported from the committee without amendment, because this government won't listen to experts, they won't listen to evidence or reason, and they certainly won't listen to the opposition. They won't listen to the public unless they are completely backed into a corner or it's just before election time.

This Liberal government thinks it knows best, every single time, and this conceit is its greatest and most damaging character defect. Its arrogance has grown with every passing year, as it gets more and more comfortable in the big chair and feels more and more indispensable. When a government has been in power that long—any government—when it becomes that insulated from everyday people and so sure of its own righteousness, then that, more than ever, is when the public needs checks and balances as a defence of its own interests. That's exactly what we need and exactly what we're not getting.

In closing, the last thing we need in this province is less transparency, less accountability, but that is exactly what this bill provides. My colleague from Toronto-Danforth has said that this bill will be condemned for years to come, that it will be condemned in the same way the fire sale of Hydro One has been and will be condemned. He has said there is no doubt—none—that this bill will be condemned in future inquiries into energy scandals in this province.

This bill reduces accountability, it locks out the public, it suppresses criticism, it suppresses evidence and it suppresses expertise. This bill enables bad decision-making, enables arrogance and enables more scandals. This bill is a disaster for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to join the discussion this afternoon on Bill 135.

I do want to offer some comments on the conservation aspect of the bill, which I know is going to be very important to the people in Kitchener Centre that I represent.

1710

But first, I feel compelled to offer some comments on the assertion that has been put forward this afternoon by some members that manufacturing is leaving Ontario, tied to energy. I would invite these members, these critical members, to visit my riding of Kitchener Centre, where, currently, we have about 2,000 jobs that need to be filled in the manufacturing sector. This information is from the head of our Workforce Planning Board. We're having great success in our region finding people for these positions. I even read an article in the paper today about Windsor and their economy turning around. Despite the negative spin that you hear, that we have this assertion that manufacturing is hurting, tied to the cost of energy, I would say the facts don't bear this up.

I do want to let people know about two new initiatives: the energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiative for large buildings, and the water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products and appliances. You know, this is going to help Ontario families, businesses and the province as a whole conserve energy and water and to manage our costs. It's going to help us to make some smart decisions about the products that we do use.

Now, Ontario is already showing leadership with energy reporting and benchmarking requirements for provincial government buildings and broader public sector buildings. We're proposing to expand that to private buildings, with energy and water reporting and benchmarking, to buildings that are 50,000 square feet and above. Those requirements are going to be phased in over a three-year period.

Benchmarking and reporting are innovative ways to help us save on our costs and save energy and money. It's another reason why Bill 135 makes great sense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): I recognize the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You look good in the Speaker's chair. Congratulations on your promotion.

I do want to say that I listened to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. He raised a number of important issues with this piece of legislation and with the energy policy of this provincial government.

I also want to remind the member from Kitchener and the entire Liberal government that we've lost over 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the province. I represent a riding in southwestern Ontario that has been particularly hard hit, as has our entire region. Heinz, Caterpillar: The list goes on and on and on about the thousands and thousands of jobs that have been lost. I can say quite frankly that this government's energy policy has helped to create jobs in the United States of America.

This government's energy policies helped create jobs in other provinces within this country.

We have the most expensive energy in all of North America. That's a fact. The rates are continuing to go up and up and up. It's not just about per-kilowatt-hour pricing; it's the all-in price of energy in this province. It's undeniable.

As I said when I was up earlier talking about Bill 135, you just have to talk to small business owners in your riding. Every small business owner in all of our ridings will be saying the same thing, whether it's that Foodland grocery store that paid \$8,000 a month for hydro and is now paying \$10,000 a month; that Crabby Joe's restaurant that used to pay \$4,000 a month and is now paying \$6,000 to \$8,000 a month; or that hardware store that used to pay \$4,000 a month five years ago and is now paying \$8,000 a month. It's undeniable.

This government, like the member from Hamilton said, has been in power for 13 years. They are out of touch. That's what happens when governments are in too long. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I hope the good folks back in Glengarry-Prescott-Russell are aware that you are in the chair today, sir.

I'd like to make some comments on those that were made by my friend from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, who reminded us that the Ontario Energy Board is about to lose most of its power, that they used to hold public hearings when they were talking about new extensions to the hydro grid, and that citizen input, once valued, will no longer be valued because this bill will take away that public oversight and those public hearings, and give all the power on that decision-making over to the Minister of Energy, the provincial cabinet and the Premier of Ontario.

That's like saying, "Trust us. We're from the government and we're here to help." We know that when the people of Ontario have trusted this government before, we ended up with, "Oh, we're not going to sell Hydro." "Oh, yes, we are going to sell Hydro." We ended up with the gas plant fiasco. This \$40 million—this billion dollars. Ornge air ambulance: "Trust us. Oh, yes, we've got oversight." eHealth: "We'll just give the contract to some friends of ours, some buddies." The Sudbury by-election: "Oh, trust us, we did nothing wrong." The cancellation of the offshore energy contracts that could end up costing half a billion dollars: "Trust us."

The government says a lot about new jobs that have been created. Well, they did nothing for the Fiat Chrysler plant in Windsor. That corporation went out and created thousands of new jobs. In fact, they had the official launch of the new Pacifica in the plant last week. Not one government rep was invited because not one government dollar was put in there. There was no government input at all. They can take the credit for jobs that are being created, but they're not doing anything. The corporations are doing it on their own. These automotive manufactur-

ers are warning these guys: “Do something about energy pricing in Ontario, because if you don’t, we’re going to be leaving town. We’re going to be leaving your province if you don’t do something about it and do it now.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I have to echo the sentiments of my colleagues and say what a pleasure it is to see you in that chair. Well done.

I wanted to chime in here. With all due respect to the opposition member who suggests that it doesn’t appear as if the government is listening, we are listening. The massive number of consultations and round-table discussions that we have had on this bill has already been quoted, amounting to almost 8,000 questionnaires, as well as 100 First Nation and Métis community groups who were represented in numerous round-table discussions. Let’s make sure that gets on the record once again.

The other thing that I would like to highlight is a little bit more about the indigenous community engagement. One of the pillars of Ontario’s approach to indigenous policy is community economic development. Participation by First Nation and Métis communities in the energy sector is just one way that the government is enabling this kind of economic development. The long-term energy plan process provides an opportunity to understand First Nation and Métis communities’ interests and needs in order to outline a clear vision for involving indigenous communities in the energy sector. This is very important to us; it’s very important to our indigenous communities and to the indigenous economy in the future.

The 2013 long-term energy plan incorporates feedback received from the most comprehensive consultation engagement ever undertaken by the ministry, which included—and I repeat—10 indigenous engagement sessions and meetings across the province, with participation from nearly 100—hear it, everyone?—First Nation and Métis community groups.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): I return now to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his two-minute wrap-up.

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d like to thank the members from Kitchener Centre, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Windsor–Tecumseh and of course Kingston and the Islands.

I would like to address, first of all, the member from Kitchener Centre. I’m glad that things are rosy in Kitchener Centre, and that’s great. That’s a part of Ontario. But if she would like to take a bus tour through Hamilton, I could show her all the empty factories and I could show her all the jobs that have been lost. In fact, in 1976 when I worked there, just in the plant I was in alone, Hilton Works, there were 13,200 hourly employees and 6,000 salaried and support staff, which is 20,000 people. Right now, there are maybe 800 total, altogether.

That’s every factory. Down Burlington Street, which the transportation minister is aware of, the main

manufacturing street in Hamilton—a huge street—I used to have trouble getting a parking spot when I went to work as a tradesman. You could fire a cannon off now and you wouldn’t hit anybody; that’s how empty it is.

The member from Kingston and the Islands talks about all the outreach and all the amendments.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: That member is not in her seat, by the way, Speaker, and she’s talking.

They talk about all the things, all the consultation they did. It’s amazing all the consultation they did, you know, outreach and everything. Well, guess what? Not one amendment did they accept. They didn’t pass. So why did you have all those consultations and talk to all those hundreds of groups when you didn’t listen to them? Not one amendment went with this bill. Talk about arrogant. Unbelievable.

1720

The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex obviously touched on a sore spot when he said that some of the electricity rates in some of the businesses in his town have doubled in the last five to 10 years. Well, that’s probably true, but they keep claiming that we’ve got the best rates. Well, then why are all these companies leaving if we’ve got all these good rates?

Thank you, to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: You’ve got 5.4% unemployment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): The member from Barrie, come to order.

Mr. Paul Miller: There’s nothing like going for a couple of shots with a newspaper when you did absolutely nothing in that factory, but you show up for the news conference. Great stuff, folks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): I would just like to remind the members: If you’re interested in doing some crosstalk or, as we call it, heckling, I would remind you that you should be in your own seats to do that.

Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I, too, am absolutely delighted for this opportunity to speak to this very innovative and bold approach. What we’re seeing in this piece of legislation underlies the change that you are seeing in this government, elected in 2014, under the direction and the leadership of Premier Wynne, because she is brave and bold and is prepared to do things differently. We know the members on the other side of the House are the agents of no change. You don’t want to see improvements in this system, whereas we know that Premier Wynne is out to make things better, to build Ontario up, by doing government differently.

This is why, Speaker, I accepted the opportunity to run to be a part of this caucus in 2014: because I believe very much in a changed government. This is not the government that has been in power since 2003. This is a very new and bold government, doing things differently in ways that are more transparent, that are more accountable and that are being successful in building Ontario up.

We're moving down that direction on this bill, as we have on so many other initiatives before.

The members opposite complain. He talks about the arrogance associated with not accepting a single amendment. We get from the other side that there are too many amendments being proposed, and we're criticized for it. We get from the other side that there are too few amendments being adopted, and we're accused of arrogance. We won't be adopting amendments, Speaker, unless they make sense.

What we saw from the people on this particular bill, on Bill 135—it was about people who wanted the status quo. Let's understand what the status quo was. The status quo, the integrated power system plan, was adopted in 2004 as part of the new OPA arrangements. In 2006, the OPA directed the integrated power system plan to go into operations—over 10 years ago. In 10 years, not a single plan was developed under that process. The process was broken.

The process was broken, and this Premier and this Minister of Energy recognized that we need to have a far more flexible one, more inclusive of people's comments and expertise, but not to be held to ransom by the special interests, the lawyers and the consultants who went through endless consultations, review and challenges. The only people making money on the integrated power system plan were the consultants and lawyers—endless hearings in front of the OEB, challenging the evidence of experts with some other experts.

Now, we know how difficult it would be to get this House together to come up with a coordinated, integrated system plan, knowing the difference in opinions around this House. They can't even come to the table to talk about election reform financing. Obviously, we all agree that we need to have changes. But what do we get? The Green Party comes to the table, but the third party will have nothing to do with it. It's the same—

Interjection: Which party?

Mr. Arthur Potts: That's the NDP. They will have nothing to do with it. It's so disconcerting.

What we've recognized in the energy-planning process is we have to stand up and take leadership. It is leadership that is at the heart of this bill, because this bill will allow us—all of the government—to go out into the communities, as we did with the 2013 long-term energy plan, and have the experts tell us what they think. They will tell us, and there will be experts on every side of the equation. There will be experts from communities who say that we need to do more of this and more of that. We will sit back, we will evaluate all the evidence and all the intelligence that comes to us through this process, and we'll make decisions. We'll make decisions to do what we believe, on the basis of the input that we've had, is in the best interest of all Ontario.

Then people can judge us, as they will every couple of years. Every four years, we'll get judged on whether our plan was the smart plan and was the right plan, and we'll accept that judgment. But we will take leadership and we'll make tough decisions.

That's what we saw in the whole Hydro One debate. We made a tough decision because we knew the importance of building infrastructure in this province without increasing our debt load. We took a bold decision. We know that members on the other side don't agree with it. It surprises me to no end that members of the official opposition don't support it. It seems to be right down their bailiwick. But we took a tough decision and we're making it happen. That will be with every single plan that we come out with on long-term energy planning. The one that we complete for 2017 will have a plan set forward for the future of energy transmission and power in this province, and it will be a plan that we've decided is in the best interest of the province. Judge us in 2018 whether it's right or not.

Let's be very clear about the process that's being set out here. The government is the planning body. We will take responsibility to put a plan in place that will do the things that we need to do, and that's to move power and transmit it across the province in a way that helps the communities as best as we possibly can. We'll make that plan. We will be the planning body.

The OEB is the regulatory body which will oversee the prices associated with us implementing the plan. It will be on the basis of that that the OEB can make judgments about charging more for electricity or, frankly, charging less. If the plan works, we believe that we'll be attracting more consumers of electricity into the province and, then, with greater volumes, prices can come down.

I'm quite comfortable and confident in having the OEB continue that regulatory, overseeing role and not be confusing its role with the planning body, because that's the role of government: to plan and to take hard decisions and put them into place.

Then, the IESO becomes the implementing body. The rules that we're directing here are going to ensure that we have price-competitive quotes for every system build-out that's coming forward. We'll get the best price for the taxpayers of Ontario. We'll build where we need to be building because that will be the new role of the Independent Electricity System Operator.

I'm very comfortable with our decision to move forward in refurbishing nuclear power plants. We've heard some members across talk about it—

Mr. Bill Walker: What does your Minister of the Environment think about that?

Mr. Arthur Potts: He's fully supportive, too, as a member of our government. For him to be speculating that we may not need those power plants with the way the cost of energy—sustainable, free energy, in a sense—is coming down because the wind keeps turning and the sun will shine—that's fair game.

But for the next 25 years, the assets of those nuclear plants being refurbished will be absolutely essential to our mix. But it doesn't mean that 50 years from now they will be essential. I envisage a day when we will be able to provide 60% of Ontario's power through wind energy with the appropriate amenities of storage and usage and off-peak usage and pricing. The time will come, but for now, it's a totally consistent position—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It'll never happen.

Mr. Arthur Potts: You can make all the hay you want about the contradictory position, but it doesn't take you anywhere. It's totally consistent to speculate what it will look like.

The nuclear refurbishments: I know that the members on the other side are delighted that we are putting in a plan to refurbish nuclear. It's going to cost seven to seven and a half cents a kilowatt hour, all-in costs, so much cheaper than the average cost of power—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I think I have to interrupt the proceedings for a moment and remind the members that the member for Beaches—East York has the floor. I need to be able to hear him, and the heckling is actually out of order.

The member for Beaches—East York

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you so much, Speaker. I knew that I would get a fair hearing from you as Chair. There was a little concern with the previous member who was on the bench. But I wasn't challenging the Chair; I was just saying.

So we know that we're coming in with a plan to provide baseload power at between seven and seven and a half cents a kilowatt hour.

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That's our long-term future. As the member from Mississauga—Streetsville talked at length about, we have done the heavy lifting already. We've done the heavy lifting to get us to a 90% clean energy supply in this province. Everything we're doing now—we're maxing out at the levels of our price increases in such a way that others are going to have to increase their prices dramatically as they get off coal to do the heavy lifting that we've already done. We are sitting in an excellent position as we move forward on climate change in our legislation that we'll be introducing for third reading tomorrow. There are very important measures contained in this bill which allow us to respond with the flexibility that we need in a long-term energy plan to take advantage of all the climate change opportunities that we will have, in order to use smart meter, smart grid systems.

What we saw under the previous planning process was so bogged down. Nobody understood the rules of the long-term plan, and that's a problem. It's a problem when you talk about greenhouses that are desperately trying to expand their operations. Under the old plan, it's difficult for them to put power into greenhouses behind the meter, so that the greenhouses can supply the carbon dioxide that's needed for these huge greenhouses that are growing the tomatoes and peppers for our marketplaces to displace the peppers and the tomatoes that we're getting from Mexico and California. It's difficult. We're putting in an energy plan which will make it easier for greenhouse growers in Windsor and all through the Niagara Peninsula to start growing 24 hours a day all through the winter using combined heat and power for heat, to heat the greenhouses and using LED lighting with off-peak

power pricing on electricity to grow tomatoes, vegetables etc.

I'm very, very excited about this plan and know that the bill we're bringing in here does what we know it needs to do to create the flexibility necessary, because we're not going to be sitting in endless hearings trying get through the process. We're going to make decisions. In the two years, almost, that I've been here, it has been one of the most robust agendas of bringing forward new legislation that helps Ontario be built up. It's progressive—

Interjection: It's progressive.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Absolutely. It's a progressive agenda and it has changed the channel on transparency, on retention of records—all the things that the members of the opposition will be critical of our government about things that happened before we were the government—because we now have the flexibility and power to put these programs into place.

Another piece that we're seeing in this is the importance of conservation in the system, how important it will be to find new ways of conservation. But I don't want to dwell on conservation. Even the members opposite get the importance of conservation because it makes a lot of sense. There's a little anomaly, we know, with the OEB giving a price increase because people were almost too successful in the conservation angle. I get that piece. There's fewer kilowatt hours being utilized, therefore some of the overall system costs have to be spread over fewer—it results in a small increase.

What happens when you think in the future of where we're going—with storage technology, with smart meter technology, with hybrid and all-electric vehicle technologies. We are going to be using more electrons in this program by displacing fossil fuels.

My brother Gordon Potts works for Northland Power, a sustainable energy developer. He tells me about the future he sees where we are not just doing demand management, but encouraging more demand, because every kilowatt of electricity that we can use from low-carbon sources—zero-carbon sources in 90% of the case in Ontario. If it displaces fossil fuels, we do an incredible thing for our greenhouse gas reductions. The more cars using fossil fuels we get off the streets and put into electric vehicles, the better; the more charging stations we can set up in a network across this province so that people can feel comfortable about driving 120 kilometres or 140 kilometres, stopping to get a coffee, do a quick energy boost in their car and continue their journey—it's fantastic.

The possibilities of energy storage associated with having electric vehicles, cars with batteries that at night use off-peak power to charge the vehicle and then during the day, as they drive to work, use off-peak power—when they plug into their work charger, they become a storage mechanism. So when they go on and turn on their computer, when they flick on their lights, when they turn on the machinery that they are being paid to work for, that energy is coming from their car, and other people's

cars are in the system. This is what our smart meters—under the old planning process, it was far too complex and difficult to get us past that process. That's why it is absolutely essential we get to this bill and that we adopt it as quickly as we can.

I note that others have already spoken, but we've had over 16 hours of debate on this bill; five and a half hours on third reading alone. As I said, it's no surprise that there were no amendments passed; we actually got this bill absolutely right. We did so in the first drafting because we had a year and a half of planning around the 2013 long-term energy plan to demonstrate how it could work and should work. And it has worked that way, Speaker.

We have a plan that came out of the long-term energy plan achieving balance. That's exactly where we need to be: a balance between the generation—off-peak and baseload—the consumption and storage opportunities. By pumping water up a hill—in Marmora, Ontario or in the Great Lakes, like Lake Superior—to run it back downhill again when we need the power at peak times, this is the kind of storage technology that we can invest in so that we can achieve the balance that is being proposed under the 2013 long-term energy plan.

This is, I think, why we need to think about curtailing debate. We've been over all the issues.

Mr. Bill Walker: A closure motion?

Mr. Arthur Potts: We've been over all the issues. It's not my role to bring closure at this point, but we've been over the issues in a repeated way.

We know that the member from Toronto–Danforth is stuck in the past. I see him all the time going door to door in the community that I used to live in. He goes door to door and he's Mr. Negative, Mr. No to everything. He walks around and he has got to say, "We can't have this. Put up a sign. Be against that. Be against this."

What are you guys in favour of? Where is your long-term energy plan? Your long-term energy plan is stuck in the planning process that you have been posing all these motions for to denude the government of the power to take responsibility for decisions. We don't want to see that. We're fully supportive of this bill in its present form.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: The cup is half empty.

Mr. Arthur Potts: The cup is full—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: That's right; his cup is half empty.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —with the planning that we're doing around this.

Speaker, on that happy note, I'm going to take some of my own advice. I think it's time to stop debate on this thing and I'm going to sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: That was really interesting. The member across certainly is quite vocal, enthusiastic and everything else. Unfortunately, I remember our leader saying, "Nobody has a corner on good ideas." We'd certainly support a good idea.

As we've seen from the committee process, this government doesn't believe anybody has a good idea because they accepted no amendments—nothing. They didn't accept good advice that was given to them.

Certainly, we've seen this from their past actions. Selling Hydro One is certainly one of them. Some 80% of the people of Ontario, I believe, thought that was a bad idea. But no, not these guys. They just kept right on going and they put the second offering up here just the other week.

It's interesting to me, listening to the last speaker, that he believes that they got it right. I wish that every piece of legislation put in front of this House was exactly perfect, which the speaker seemed to think it is. Really, if it was perfect, what are we doing here? It's not perfect.

It takes away a lot of the things that we're used to. It removes the independence of the Independent Electricity System Operator, and things like this certainly leave no oversight to the minister.

The minister can pretty much do what he wants. The minister can make rules and regulations whenever he wants and nobody can stop him.

It's too bad there weren't some changes that we and the NDP proposed, and that weren't adopted by this government. I'm really afraid that this is going to be something that we're going to really regret in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The comments from the member from Beaches–East York should give us pause because they are completely and utterly irrational.

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I'm reading from the *Globe and Mail*, from the editorial from April 29, "Coming Soon: Ontario's Green Energy Fiasco, the Sequel." It goes on to say:

"The size of the disaster in the province's electricity system is hard to get your head around. But voters, consumers, businesses and especially the Liberal government should be rereading Ms. Lysyk's report. Because a document leaked to the *Globe and Mail* this week suggests that the Liberals, who a decade ago broke the electricity system through a fatal combination of good intentions and a wilful disregard of both expertise and experience, may be preparing to repeat the exercise with their next greenhouse gas reduction plan"—which the member mentioned.

"A decade ago, the government of Ontario started driving up electricity costs with a simple objective in mind: It wanted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the production of electricity. This was the right objective. But the way it went about it was all wrong. Instead of encouraging the electricity sector to be as efficient as possible, the government essentially ordered it to become costly, inefficient and irrational....

"The result is that the cost of generating electricity in Ontario has exploded, even as power costs plummeted elsewhere. Between 2004 and 2014, power generation costs in Ontario increased by 74%, according to the auditor."

So when the member gets up and says that they've done the heavy lifting—these are his words—what they've done is that they've left the people of this province with few options to even afford their hydro bills. They've driven businesses out of this province. The Auditor General has the stats and the proof that should give you pause. I can guarantee you that Bill 135, the government bill, will not get this government under control, because they will do everything in their power to run this province out of its own electricity system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I have a limited amount of time. I want to spend just a moment or two—I don't have any specific questions for the member from Beaches–East York. I actually want to take some of my time to pay tribute to that man. In his presentation here this afternoon, he not only spoke passionately, as he always does here in this Legislature, on behalf of the good people of Beaches–East York—the people who were wise enough to send him here to this Legislature two years ago to be their ambassador, to be their champion. I also have to say any time a member of the governing side can provoke such an outrageous response from the members of the Conservative caucus and the members of the NDP caucus, it warms my heart. It tells me that, in this case, he has hit the nail right on the head. So I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for his presentation here today, for standing up for what he knows to be right with respect to how the energy system is evolving, not just here in Ontario but around the world.

I want, with my remaining time, to kind of latch on to one of the words used by the member from Kitchener in the NDP caucus: “irrational.” There are so many examples that could be provided here, in limited time, about the irrational approach that both the Conservatives and the NDP have taken on so many issues over the last number of months, including with respect to the electricity system and the energy system, that I don't have enough time to go into every single aspect, except to say that, again, this bill, this legislation is all about moving the province forward, building the province up, making sure that we can continue to do things like build an LRT in Hamilton, like support an LRT and deliver two-way, all-day GO service to Kitchener and do so much across the infrastructure spectrum that many people in the Conservative caucus would want.

Speaker, the irony in all of this is that every single time we try to move the province forward, they vote against budget after budget after budget that would help all of their communities. That, unfortunately, is a shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to bring comments to my colleague from Beaches–East York. He started off by saying that we didn't like change. Well, I will agree with him. We didn't want him to sell Hydro One, along with 85% of the people of Ontario. We didn't want them to double our debt. We didn't want the highest energy rates

on the continent. We didn't want to lose 300,000 manufacturing jobs. So no, we didn't want any of that change.

Then he went on to say that Premier Wynne was going to do government differently. Well, if deleting emails and changing Hansard is doing government differently, you have succeeded; five unprecedented OPP investigations under your government, you have succeeded; doubling the debt in 13 years, you have succeeded; a record number of closure motions in this House, you have succeeded; record spending or overspending, you have succeeded; decimated the horse racing industry, you have succeeded; election reform—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Sorry. I apologize.

The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek knows he's got to be quiet while someone else has the floor. The Minister of Transportation knows he's got to be quiet while another member has the floor.

I'm going to give you extra time. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The member actually talked about election reform very, very briefly, but I want to ask him a very pointed question. Back in October, I presented my private member's bill to do this. I want to ask him how he voted and I want to ask him how every single member of his caucus voted on that private member's bill about election financing and third-party advertising.

Half a billion dollars a year we spend on excess energy that we produce and pay the United States and Quebec to take, making them doubly competitive. I'm not certain how he wants to talk about that one.

He talked about how we need to be planning. The only good planning they do is disaster planning, because they're creating it.

Finally, he talked about balance. I just wish, for once, in the 13 years I've been here, they would have—or not 13 years I've been here; I've only been here five. But in their 13 years, would they just balance the budget once and not sell the cow that produces the milk?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Beaches–East York can now reply.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you for the very spirited remarks from the members for Perth–Wellington and Kitchener–Waterloo, the great Minister of Transportation, who is doing more to build this Ontario up with the systems he's putting in place, and, of course, my friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I wouldn't even know where to start. What surprises me the most from the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is that he wants to know how I voted. I'd think, after five years, he'd know how to look up Hansard, but I'd be happy to show him. It's not a difficult thing.

What I do want to focus my remarks mostly on is, actually, the Minister of Transportation's remarks, because it is his ministry that some of the greatest reductions of greenhouse gases are going to come from and

some of the great new demands for electricity are going to come from as we do transform our rail system in Ontario to be an electric system. The regional express rail, all electrified across Ontario, is going to become the greatest source of new use of electrical energy, displacing fossil fuels. That is so critically important.

Yes, there's a little bit of extra supply generation capacity in the marketplace, and we have to be doing something with it, but my godfather Larry Higgins, who was the chief forecaster for Ontario Hydro many, many years ago as they were building electrical nuclear plants, used to like to say that forecasting in hydro is a lot like what John A. Macdonald said about gin: A little bit too much is probably just the right amount. So we do have a situation when there is excess, but as we move and get into the storage technology and we have a smarter grid, that will be repaired.

I do appreciate—oh, one last thing. The other largest source of reduction we're going to get in fossil fuels will be coming in First Nations properties, where we've identified something like 21 of 25 First Nations rural communities as prime—it's economical, now, to move with wiring. This plan will let us get there and help our First Nations people all across northern Ontario.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome four new constituents in my riding. I just received word today that four babies were born at my home. They are the robins on the windowsill outside the laundry room. We welcome them to Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pretty sure that's not a point of order.

Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this somewhat interesting bill, Bill 135. I wanted to start with the Ontario Energy Board Act and the Electricity Act, because it does amend these two acts.

The main issue is that this bill removes the independence of the Independent Electricity Systems Operator. The bill centralizes all transmission and electricity sector planning with the minister's political staff and cabinet, thereby overriding those who should know about how to run an energy sector, such as industry experts at the IESO and the OEB.

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When it comes to choosing what is best for the province and the electricity system within it, that decision will be made with a partisan and political lens. Building power lines to the north could easily be vetoed by a desire to bring hydro in from some other place.

Also, energy is a necessity of life. The government should not be able to dangle needed electricity projects that would improve affordability and reliability in front of certain ridings come election time to secure a victory. We should do what's best for the province, not what's best for the government.

By making the IESO bend to the will of the minister or cabinet, political goals may differ from what is needed on more than just transmission. For example, the long-term energy plan may, according to the bill, include goals or targets surrounding air emissions from the energy sector, or even the use of cleaner energy sources. By explicitly naming these two objectives, the ministry may prioritize them over reliability, cost-effectiveness or issues with energy supply. Essentially, the minister or government of the day can create whatever policy they like, on which grounds they like. This is hardly a stable system that acts in the best interests of all Ontarians.

The IESO does not have the ability to object to any of the directives or targets that they are given by the ministry. Even if functionally impossible, they are forced to create an implementation plan that the minister can alter any portion of or outright reject until he or she is satisfied. Again, the IESO cannot reasonably object to any project.

There is no requirement for the minister to hold consultations with Ontarians or people within the energy sector. The bill only suggests groups, later writing that the minister must only consult with "groups that the minister considers appropriate given the matters being addressed by the long-term energy plan."

Speaker, that's very dangerous. We have seen the disaster of the Green Energy Act; we've seen that. If they had consulted the right people, they would have known that wind farms are nothing but trouble in other countries that they were put in. We already are seeing countries in Europe—Britain and wherever else—cancelling these contracts because they're just too unaffordable. Some of these places are very energy poor right now because they can't afford the cost of it. The people are poor, who are having to pay for this. If the government had taken time to look at green energy, especially when it pertains to wind turbines, they'd have seen that. But again, they did not consult with experts or people who had experience in this type of thing.

It also means that the government can make critical decisions regarding the expansion of natural gas without ever consulting Union Gas or Enbridge, for example. In addition, even if the government does consult these groups, they are under no obligation to act on their advice. They're only legislatively required to "consider the results of such consultation." That's very dangerous.

Since cabinet and the minister write and approve the long-term energy plan, none of the documentation rationalizing any of the plans will be made public. All of these plans will be drafted in secret. In addition, because the OEB and the IESO are no longer allowed to hold hearings or raise opposition to any plans put forward by the government, the technical analysis regarding anything from cost to impact on energy supply will not be brought forward. That means if the government wants to move ahead with an expensive transmission project—say, new lines to Quebec—they can put the entire cost onto the rate base of hydro bills without any objection from any entity. They also can do this even if the project is not needed in the first place.

I want to talk a little bit about the Green Energy Act, which I have touched on previously. The Green Energy Act, I believe, was thought of for good reasons: to help control pollution in our environment. However, when it was first contracted, the prices they were paying for these projects was just way too high. The government set those prices—under what consultation, we don't know, but they were setting prices higher than what was normally given to some of these projects.

Now, we've seen, certainly in the time I've been here—actually, one of the reasons I got involved in politics at this level was that when I was a councillor in North Perth and these projects were being proposed, they took our planning rights away. Municipalities could not object to wind turbines being put in the municipality. That caused a lot of trouble in our municipality and certainly in municipalities throughout Ontario. The fighting, if I can use that term, amongst neighbours—we saw churches broken up; we saw incidents in public schools with bullying. It got that bad. Yet this government keeps on okaying these projects.

One of the worst examples I can see is allowing a wind farm project up around Collingwood, at the airport. How ridiculous is that? Nobody is taking any responsibility for that. I can assure you, Speaker, that if an airplane crashes into one of those things, "Oh, it's not my fault. It's not my fault."

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a federal responsibility.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a federal responsibility and the feds have no jurisdiction over those two airports, for various reasons, as explained by the member from Simcoe.

I can see what's going to happen. Hopefully, it won't happen, but if it does, there's going to be a crash. If there is a crash, "It's not my fault. We're trying to save the environment." Unfortunately, the person in that airplane probably won't live to see any changes in the environment.

I can't understand why this government has introduced a bill that perpetuates that kind of thinking. They

can do, by this bill, whatever they want and they can continue on doing it, and they won't listen to anybody else. They won't listen to experts. They won't listen to us. As we've heard from previous speeches here, they wouldn't accept any amendments to the bill. And as much as what has been said this afternoon by the government—as one speaker said, "We've got it perfect." Well, I'm sorry; that just doesn't happen in this world. It isn't perfect. And to say that the opposition parties had no good amendments for this bill is just pure arrogance, I submit.

Part of this bill has to do with energy audits. The bill will allow the government to quietly enact home energy audits through the changes to the Green Energy Act and the proclamation of past sections of that act.

The bill also leaves the door open to applying these mandatory audits to businesses as well. By forcing homeowners and businesses to report the amount of electricity, water and gas they use, the government is setting themselves up to be able to easily tax the use of these resources in the form of a sin tax. They could easily be the next step in a carbon-intensive agenda.

The elimination of new FIT contracts is a step in the right direction; I would agree with that. However, the bill still allows for microFIT projects and only codifies the new large renewable procurement method being exercised instead of FITs, which are the large wind and solar projects.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Time, gentlemen, please. Time.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: One more sentence.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Okay, that's it. I'm done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
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Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
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Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
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Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
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Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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First Session, 41st Parliament

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 10 May 2016

Mardi 10 mai 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 10 May 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 10 mai 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall be sharing my time with the member from Beaches—East York.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You have to move it.

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND LOW-CARBON ECONOMY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ATTÉNUATION DU CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE ET UNE ÉCONOMIE SOBRE EN CARBONE

Mr. Murray moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas / Projet de loi 172, Loi concernant les gaz à effet de serre.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now the minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, thank you for your indulgence and patience. My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member from Beaches—East York.

I think that for many of us, when we look back on our time in this House, this debate may be one of the most important in our lives, when the history books are written. We have never in the history of humanity confronted such an overwhelming challenge as climate change.

Here in Ontario, the thermometer of that change is probably going to be felt most immediately in the transformation of an asset that we live very close to and that many people in this House represent: the boreal forest. Sadly, that forest, over the next 30 years, will warm at least four degrees Celsius in the southern part and as much as, or more than, eight degrees Celsius in the northern part, regardless of what we do at this point.

If you look at the work being done by people like Dr. Dennis Murray at Trent University, who is one of the leading scientists in this area, he just finished a study—something that I think most members in this House probably want to look at—on the lodgepole forests in BC, 80% of which have died. What has happened in those

regions of British Columbia is that those forests have changed from being a carbon sink to a carbon source.

Here in Ontario, the boreal is one of the most at-risk forests in the world right now. It's at risk because two species of trees—two of the most common, white spruce and black spruce—are both dying off at a rather extraordinary rate.

People often say, "What keeps you up at night as an environment minister?" What keeps me up most at night is the risk of losing the boreal forest or seeing the boreal forest shift, over the next couple of decades, from being a carbon sink to a carbon source.

Why is that consequential? Because one third of all the GHG emissions in the world are absorbed by our forests. They dwarf the emissions coming from human beings. And while human beings' emissions have been enough to change the carbon cycle, there is nothing we could do if we ever lost the power of the carbon sinks of our major forests. The boreal is 25 million square kilometres, 12% of the earth's surface. That and the dense rain forests of the southern hemisphere function in absorbing carbon and keeping a lid on climate change, and they're all in some state of degradation right now.

Mr. Speaker, I don't normally ask my colleagues to go and look up science, but I think it would be very helpful for all of us, as Canadians, if we read the work of two people. One I mentioned earlier, Dr. Dennis Murray of Trent University, and his internationally recognized work on the danger to our existence on this planet of the change in the boreal forest; and a rather phenomenal piece of work done by Dr. Peter Griffith. Dr. Griffith is the chief support scientist at NASA in the United States, a very famous space agency.

They're running a program right now in Canada—actually, it's sadly not in Ontario, but from the Manitoba border to Alaska—called the ABoVE project, which is the Arctic-Boreal Vulnerability Experiment. It involves 21 ground stations and a series of satellites. This is the most comprehensive study of the boreal and one of the largest projects, if not the largest project, by NASA's Earth Observatory.

One might ask why NASA has a long linear study of the boreal forest going on right now in Canada and Alaska. The reason they are looking at that is that their assessment of risk of climate change is that if the boreal forest, which is now seeing higher levels of fires at an accelerated rate than it has ever seen, causing major carbon emissions and the release of methane, which is 84 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide—the biggest risk of release is not in the High Arctic,

which is warming faster; it's actually in the forests, because the forests are now warm enough that infestations are killing them off. The climate impacts themselves are leading to the loss of white and black spruce. If those forests continue to die at the rate they are dying off right now, we would not be able to compensate for that.

People often say, "Why do scientists call climate change an existential threat to human beings?" Because those kinds of changes, combined with droughts in California and Syria, and fires on our prairies, are enough to consequently eliminate the ability of the planet to absorb carbon dioxide at a sufficient scale to allow us to maintain the chemistry of our atmosphere that would allow us to grow food and keep this planet habitable.

As I listen to myself—and I was just at the World Bank in Paris hearing those things—it's kind of depressing. I was out on Mother's Day, and my mom has gotten into this. My mom is an amazing 88-year-old woman. Talking to older people who lived through wars and depressions and things like that, we talked a lot about how material the Second World War was for her generation. A whole generation of people went off, but the threat was so understandable. People could understand the Nazis and the tanks and the need to act.

She said, "What scares me, Glen, is that your generation and my grandchildren's generation have to take on a much bigger threat than the Second World War and have to do it without the obvious, tangible, menacing threat."

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about that. And I always find it hard, and sometimes I don't choose my words as carefully as I wish to, because I find this a very difficult issue to talk about; I really do. I have a 5-year-old grandson, and I know what this will mean to him when he is 30 or 40 or 50 years old and how much a diminished planet we are leaving him if we don't change.

There is cause for hope; I'm a glass-half-full kind of guy. Just a couple of weeks ago in New York—members here will remember the agreement that was reached in Paris. I was very pleased that the member for Huron-Bruce and the member for Toronto-Danforth were able to attend. We had a good representation with the environment critics from both the opposition parties in Paris. I think we got a sense of how sobering that discussion was. Many members will remember two things that happened in Paris that were quite consequential: one, the agreement was for 3.7 degrees Celsius. And 3.7 degrees Celsius by mid-century is probably halfway to where we need to be. That is, as you know, over the two degrees Celsius that we need to keep it under. There is a growing consensus among scientists that 1.5 degrees Celsius is what we probably really need to target. The growing body of science, especially the science that has emerged since COP21, is suggesting that two degrees is a guardrail at the edge of the cliff, and that we actually have to pull this back.

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This is extraordinarily difficult. There is no other issue, I think, that members of this House have to better

understand than the near-term risks over the next 30 years from climate change. Whether it's Dr. Griffith's work or Dr. Edwards's work, we will see this acting out in real time within our communities.

I want to take a little break from that and talk about one other thing, which is this idea of transformational leadership. I apologize: When I speaking at The Economic Club, what I was trying to say and what I didn't say as articulately as I wish I had said, was that this is an age of transformational leadership. Within 30 years, our automobile fleet has to be net zero.

We're going to have to secure more of our food as spring is disrupted in the way it has been, where we had four or five metres of snow on the streets of Halifax and St. John's in late May and June; where strawberries came out in British Columbia in January last year and died because of a false spring, with blossoms being provoked from warmth; and with the loss of apple trees, which right now are anomalous and we have lost as many as 80%.

These things will become more common. Some 80% of our food is imported from California. California is in a 40-year drought. Its rivers no longer empty. The change in the atmosphere off California is causing a prolonged drought. They have to come up with new names for it. They've added two categories of drought. I can't even remember them. I was just there about a week ago. That's 80% of our tomatoes, 75% of our lettuce, and with the dollar difference, that food also is becoming an expensive scarcity. How do we secure food over the next 20 years in North America?

I think that probably 99% of the things that I say in this House or that most of us say in this House, no one is ever going to read or pay any attention to.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank God.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said, "Thank God." That's kind of too bad.

I think the speeches that we give here on this topic today might actually get read, because five, 10 or 15 years from now, as we live with the full impacts, people are going to say, "Well, what did the people we were electing really know about this and what did they actually do about it? Did they understand how serious the consequences were? Were they acting to scale with a solution that was sufficient to address it?"

Mr. John Yakabuski: That was what you said at The Economic Club?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a very good point. What I was trying to say is that this involves transformational leadership. This involves the leadership of a Roosevelt—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker? This involves the kind of—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This involves the kind of change, a kind of leadership—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This involves the kind of change that we saw under Franklin Roosevelt, under—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This involves the kind of change, Mr. Speaker, that you had under Franklin Roosevelt or Winston Churchill. That is the level of societal change that we are really looking at and that is the kind of leadership we need. It really wasn't—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I'm having trouble hearing myself.

It is really, really challenging to try and figure out how we're going to do this in a short period of time. We have 30 years in which to get to, essentially, a net-zero planet. The Australians just came out with research now that suggests that in the early 2020s we might hit 1.5 degrees. I don't know whether anyone else deals with the gravity of that.

The parallel for this is that when I turned 20, AIDS was not a word. I remember, as some of my friends started getting sick—by the time I was 30, I had lost 43 friends to an AIDS epidemic from a virus that didn't have a word 10 years earlier. I remember, as the science started to grow around this and people became aware that this was a very different kind of virus and was becoming an epidemic, and my first few friends got sick, the kind of anxiety that you started to feel as this started to take not one or two friends but dozens of friends—and the science emerged very clearly that this was a retrovirus and wasn't easily cured—and the kinds of anxiety and fear that I lived with through my twenties when I saw most of the people I cared about die in an epidemic.

I have to say that the hardest part about this job is that there are some days where I feel what we used to call "anticipatory grief." You can see the emerging science. You can hear that some members in this House are not taking this issue seriously. You can see that many others are very—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The focus should be on how we get results.

My point is really that all of us are going to have to provide a level of leadership that's transformational that we have never, ever had in our lives to stand up and take on. That is going to be very difficult. These are going to be the most difficult decisions that any generation in human history has had to make. We're only starting down that road to understand how serious those decisions will be, made in health, in food security, in the wellness of our cities, in keeping people safe.

Everything we do in this House, first and foremost, is to keep people safe. What we really do as legislators, Mr. Speaker, is manage risk. My friend the Minister of Community and Social Services is a public health physician and she knows a lot about epidemiology and the kind of interventions that you have. If we had a terrible outbreak like SARS, the medical officer of health would intervene

because there's a risk standard. You don't allow communicable diseases. Beyond the power of politicians, medical officers of health have extraordinary powers to intercede to protect the public health, as we saw with SARS, because we live with an assessed risk. When we design a bridge, engineers have standards that have to be met in our highway and bridge codes to make them safe.

The only risk that we're managing in the danger zone is climate change. If we held this to the same standard as every other risk that we have, we would be very cautious—dare I say, very conservative—and we would keep our risk profile well within 1.5 degrees, knowing that anything out of 1.5 degrees is dangerous and, at 2 degrees, is extraordinarily dangerous and that we are risking the lives, the health and wellness, the existence of large parts of our population, our food security and our economy at that level.

At Paris, we got halfway there. From my perspective, the glass was half full. We got an agreement internationally to keep it under 3.7 degrees by 2050. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and Ban Ki-moon, whom I had the great pleasure of meeting when I was in Washington, are all urging us to bring that back to less than half of that goal: to try and make sure the next agreement gets us to about 1.5 Celsius. That's an enormous challenge. It's important to get outside this place and outside this bubble sometimes and get that information.

I want to talk a little bit about the mechanisms and why we chose a carbon market and why this is important. While cap-and-trade and a carbon market present, I think, the best solution—and I want to talk about why cap-and-trade makes so much sense and why it not only is a good market mechanism but it gives me some hope that we can get there.

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I have often said there are three groups of people in climate change these days. There are the deniers, who just don't believe the science or don't believe the severity and reality of it. There are the ditherers, who don't know what to do about it and sit around trying to come up with being all things to all people. Now, sadly, there are the defeatists: There is a large group of scientists who have said that we've left this too long. I really don't have time for any of that. You need effective market mechanisms.

There are also people who are saying, on one hand, that we should deny this and others who say that we have to go to war against capitalism somehow and bring down the capitalist state. There are some popular books out by people who author that view.

My view is that the actual solution to this is our markets and entrepreneurship, that the most effective way to reduce GHG emissions is to do what Japan is doing and has already done, what China is about to do, what Europe has done, what California has done and what South American countries are doing, which is to harness the power of the market. What cap-and-trade does is set up an allowance system for trading allowances in a carbon market. That drives out the most efficient reductions

and cost-effective reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We know that in Ontario because we have four other cap-and-trade systems, from carbon monoxide to nitric oxide. As I reported last week in this House on air quality, they are all down well over 40%, some with nearly 50% reductions in just a decade. So we know it works.

We also know it's working because many of the large resource extraction businesses in Ontario have been covered for a number of years by the cap-and-trade system in Quebec, given how integrated our economies are, and California. We know this is a powerful mechanism. It allows companies to use innovation to drive productivity, to not only reduce GHG emissions in their plants and facilities but to also improve the economic performance to make *[inaudible]* productive.

As you know, Canada has had, for several decades now, a productivity gap with the United States of about 25%. If we could ever close that gap, it would mean \$7,000 or \$8,000 more disposable income for every Ontarian. It would mean a greater return on investment and more profitable businesses. This has always been a challenge. Two of the big challenges to that have been low oil prices, which we have right now, and a low dollar. They disincent foreign purchasing of technology and they disincent the kind of investment to improve productivity.

We're going to have a bit of an uphill battle in the sense that the market conditions out there do not lend themselves easily to enable that. Even with that, we have led North America in foreign direct investment, which is a very good sign, because it means we've even beaten California now for the inflow of dollars. Why is that important to climate change or reducing emissions? Because we need to pool capital, which is what a carbon market does. It creates a pool of capital. Over the next five years that will be about \$8 billion.

That is one of the points of disagreement we have, respectfully, with the party opposite. The reason is that we believe that money is important, for the same reason the Chinese, the Japanese, the Germans, the British, California—all of our competitors, all of the other large Western free market economies—have chosen not a revenue-neutral carbon tax but a very powerful carbon market. We're trying to link them globally so that the bigger the market, the more stable the price is; the lower the carbon price has to be to get higher results.

If you look at what does that pool of capital do, and why is that so important: It would be almost impossible, over the next five years, to achieve our economic and environmental objectives without some capital to go and match what Nova Corp. did, which is put a quarter of a billion dollars into their facility here to do cogen and natural gas to help the trucking industry retire carbon-intensive trucks and buy new ones. You need that money, because most families—and I would dare say even many of us—would find it financially difficult to change out our fossil-fuel-burning home heating and cooling system with ground source heat pumps and batteries and the kinds of new technologies that are being introduced by

great developers like Sifton homes, in London; in Barrie, Royalpark Homes; and, here in Toronto, Stanton. These are three companies that are already building net-zero communities.

I was out in the great city of London, home to my friend the President of the Treasury Board. I spent quite a lot of time and I'm going back, because you've already got people who are building these sorts of homes. These are fairly conservative—small-c conservative—developers who are out there building net-zero communities, and they're doing it because they get the science of it. They're also doing it because they're essentially selling you a home without much of a heating or cooling bill. That's the great thing about getting net-zero homes: Net-zero homes use a lot less energy and don't have to burn fossil fuels to be heated and cooled.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Why do you need subsidies then?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You need that kind of transformation. They all said two things to me. They asked for two things. They said, "Can you do with homes the same things that you're doing with electric vehicles? Because for people who have to retrofit their homes, we can't build it into the costs. We've got to retrofit every single building."

The member for Huron-Bruce said, "Why do you need subsidies?" Well, because there are several million buildings in Ontario and a lot of middle- and lower-income people. We know from the experience of places like Switzerland and Britain that the only way this actually happens is if there is a grant program that helps working families buy that equipment. We know that. We've looked at it. I know my friend was in Paris and I hope she talked to the Conservative members of Parliament who were there. I met with several of them and asked them, "What's working in Britain?" They have huge subsidies for net-zero buildings and technologies and batteries, and they're very successful. Without that, you're not going to get the switch in homes. Without flipping those homes into net-zero homes, changing out that technology—without a robust program, you'll end up with people having to absorb the cost of fossil fuel increases as they go up over time.

The whole objective of a cap-and-trade system is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to provide the capital for people to do two important things: one, retrofit their home so that it's fossil free. Once it's fossil fuel free, you don't pay anything. That's how the system is working so well in places like California. That's why the entire country of China is taking it from a seven-province program to a national program. The simple truth is, it works. The second thing is, how are you going to switch people? You've got some great leadership from Steve Carlisle at GM. He wrote a really interesting piece and said more elegantly what I was trying to say at the Economic Club, which is that we're in for an era of disruptive leadership like we've never seen. The market conditions, globally, are going to change, but the conditions of the environment, the impacts of the environ-

ment are going to disrupt our supply chains and create a greater challenge than we've ever faced before. So we really need a quality of leadership to manage change at a pace that we've never, ever talked about before.

My friend from Niagara-Glanbrook—I hope I got that right. We talked a lot. We went for dinner the other night and had a very good conversation about the shared economy and the linkages between the low-carbon economy and the shared economy—autonomous vehicles, electric vehicles—

Mr. Arthur Potts: West Glanbrook.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: West Glanbrook, thank you, the member for Niagara—West Glanbrook—I have great, real respect for him. He and I have developed a very good collaborative relationship on these things. He makes a very good point. He has been a leading voice in this House, quite frankly, on understanding why autonomous vehicles and electric vehicles—where a car is used for 20 hours a day and rests for two, rather than only used for two and rests for 20—are part of the low-carbon economy. There are a number of members on both sides of this House who understand that we're going through an economic revolution bigger than the information technology revolution—greater change within a decade. When you used to have computers that would fit in the size of this space and you told someone that your computer in 10 years would be the size of a notepad, people probably would have laughed at you. But we went through that kind of change.

I want to suggest for the history books here, and for the level of disruption that Mr. Carlisle and others were talking about, that we are going through 10 years of that kind of change. If we are going to beat climate change, which I am determined to do, and I think many of us in this House are—this government, certainly, is determined to—we are going to have to manage change at a faster pace of technology than we saw in the information technology revolution.

That was a \$1-trillion expansion of the western economy. The shift to a low-carbon economy is a \$6-trillion expansion of our economy. That is the other reason why we need this pool of capital. We need this pool of capital because industry will need that kind of capital. You may remember that BlackBerry, when it started off, got money from this government—seed capital money, our innovation funds—under just about every party in power. But this level of transformation—if you think about the heating and cooling systems in 150 heavy, large emitting sites, the amount of money that will have to go back into industry to deal with lime kilns, to deal with fuel switching, to deal with net-zero transformation: All of those industries—I think I've met multiple times now with representatives of each of those industries—have been working with us, and you'll see it in the action plan, to design how the proceeds most efficiently go back into the lumber industry, the cement industry, the trucking industry, the steel industry—all of these industries.

The auto sector: huge reinvestment required. We're very proud, as a government, that we made unprecedented

ed investments in the automobile sector through the recession, which is one of the reasons we have an automobile sector that today is producing more cars than it ever has in Ontario.

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Now the challenge is, how do we start to retool to ensure that the innovation for low-carbon automobiles—hydrogen and electric vehicles—happens here in Ontario? How do we manage all the new infrastructure—electric charging and massive deployment of electric and low-carbon infrastructure, natural gas—across the province? It requires private and public capital. Everyone has been very clear: Without a publicly supported program, you will not see LNG expanding across the province; you will not see electric vehicle charging expanding across the province.

The other issue we have a point of disagreement on with the opposition is the linking of markets. The official opposition argues that we should not link with Quebec and California and eventually, we hope, New England as their cap-and-trade system evolves beyond electricity. If we did not do that, the carbon price would be astronomical; it would be several-fold what it is. If Ontario or Quebec had to do it, it would be a carbon price that would be five, six, seven times higher than it could be.

The thing about a cap-and-trade system is there's a cap on it, and the big difference between jurisdictions that can reduce their emissions with a carbon price of \$15, \$20 or \$25 very efficiently is because they put a cap on their emissions and they have something called the cap decline rate. Our cap decline rate is just over 4%. That means that we restrict the permits to pollute, that we guarantee we will meet our 2020 targets. And we're not relying on the size of the price or a huge price on carbon; we're doing it very efficiently, because it would be very hard to absorb a high carbon price.

What happened with the carbon tax in British Columbia when they introduced it was that they immediately lost a couple of their cement plants and are now importing cement at a very high price. Then, in 2012, the British Columbia Legislature, with its revenue-neutral carbon tax, froze its carbon price at about \$30, after Premier Campbell had been raising it by \$5 a year, and has been unwilling, in the six or seven years since, to actually raise that price. Today, British Columbia's emissions are now going up, and they won't meet their 2020 target significantly.

For them to correct that, because they don't have the other mechanisms—they're not a linked market, so they don't have a large, buoyant market to keep prices down to provide exchanges; they don't have a legislated cap and they don't have a cap decline rate. In their system, they have to rely entirely on a bigger carbon price. And what has happened is that year after year there is a discussion, as their emissions go up—the whole reason for having carbon prices is to bring them down—and they fail to pass anything.

I think there is some history now that a cap-and-trade system that allows the market to set the price works well, and the price adjusts upward at a much lower level at

lower cost. Without that, a price-only system requires you to rely heavily on price. The other problem that the revenue-neutral jurisdictions—there aren't very many of them; I think you can count them on one hand. And there's reason for that: They've really been a failed experiment, in some senses—successful in others. In the areas where they've been successful, it's because from an economic purist's perspective, it makes some sense. From a practical perspective, they also have no pool of capital. What they had to do with the cement industry in British Columbia is reach into general revenue and provide direct subsidies to cement.

We will not have to do that. That is built into a market mechanism. That's why there are proceeds; that's why we've had this great relationship with Mike McSweeney and the people at the cement association, who are designing this entire system with us in a way that the ways the price is applied, the allowances are distributed, and the capital proceeds flow provide for the maximum rate of reductions from our cement plants without having to reach into the general revenue of the government to subsidize them, which I think is critically important and worth a healthy debate with the official opposition, who disagree with this.

McKinsey's reports on cap-and-trade on carbon define the task of improving carbon productivity. What do they mean by that? They mean that for every kilowatt hour of energy, for every kilogram of steel produced, you have to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emitted and carbon used in that process by a factor of 10 over 30 years. Essentially, we have to be down to something less than 10% of the amount of carbon dioxide emitted. I quote these people not because I'm trying to name-drop; I quote these people because I think these are very useful resources.

The work that McKinsey consulting has done on carbon productivity has been very, very instructive and has really helped inform the government's position with the work that David Sawyer has done. To distill this down to its economic essence, to save ourselves from the disasters of climate change, we really have to improve our carbon productivity by a factor of 10 over the next three decades.

That's why I believe in the power of markets. How are you going to do that? Government can't legislate that. Consumers on their own aren't going to know how to make those choices easily. People don't relate the industrial process of their home heating or the vehicle they drive relative to a standard of productivity.

This bill enables this Legislature and, more importantly, enables the people of Ontario to have a tool kit to do three things. One is to switch to a lower-carbon vehicle. That's probably the most important thing. Thirty-five percent of our emissions come from automobiles. We've got to tackle that, and that partnership is very important. I think you're seeing that kind of leadership from GM and from others. We've got competition coming from everywhere in the world. China is rapidly building an electric vehicle industry, as is Germany. We can't have those jurisdictions take away from Ontario by beating us in the innovation game and in the deployment of innovation.

The other one is home heating, about 20% of our emissions. Whether you're talking about a farm or talking about a condo in downtown Toronto, we have to reduce the emissions there, which is really switching out the fossil fuel heating.

Those are the two areas that have been growing. All of our emissions growth has come from buildings and vehicles. Our emissions reductions have come from industry. Actually, the highest level of productivity has come when industry is doing better. As a matter of fact, we're seeing higher productivity and lower carbon intensity more recently, as the economy is in a significant recovery, than we saw in the recession, where carbon intensity declined.

I think, in summing up, that it's a robust market mechanism. It provides a large, stable pool with the carbon market, which will keep prices down and give businesses lots of choices. A carbon market is not a political instrument; it's a market instrument. Politicians don't make decisions. The pricing market, innovation and productivity drive what the carbon price is. It creates a vitally critical pool of capital to help Ontarians make that transition and relieve financial stress from families to do that. It incites higher productivity, or it works to help facilitate higher productivity with business, and I think that's really important. I think this is a very, very good bill.

In closing, I want to thank the member from Toronto—Danforth for his work at the committee, his ideas, his collaboration and the seriousness with which he took this, and I want to thank members of the third party, the New Democratic Party, for their support in this. We've had a very good dialogue between our two parties on this, and I think it has led to a better bill.

I will now turn it over and, in doing so, thank my friend Arthur Potts, who provided such extraordinary leadership at the committee and is such an advocate for this. The member for Beaches—East York.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It is indeed an honour to be able to speak to the introduction of the third reading on this bill, Bill 172, the climate change mitigation act. I want to start by thanking the minister. The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change has shown such incredible leadership on this file: his breadth of knowledge, his passion for this issue. It strikes him—and I know, because we've had these conversations over a glass of wine late at night as we do briefings around this issue—at the heart, in an emotional, profound way, how important this issue is. He brings that passion to the debate.

When he gets heckled from members on the other side in the midst of this, you can see how disruptive that is, because they're not taking the seriousness of this issue to the extent that is necessary to understand how critically important it is for us to get this piece right, moving forward over the next 20 or 30 years.

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I want to thank the minister for his passion and leadership. It's that leadership I was speaking about yesterday in the House on our energy planning bill that is so

critical. We are taking a direction which, 10 years ago, was politically unfeasible—that we could have gone down this route. It was so complicated, so difficult, for people to embrace in the general public because it's so easy for members of the opposition to characterize this as a simple tax that's going to hurt people's lives. We've grown up in the last 20 years in an environment where any kind of raising money through the public purse in order to do good work for the public is perceived as being off-base and political suicide. So being in a position now that we can take on this file with a program that is guaranteed to have end results, that will play its role in reducing carbon and slowing down temperature increases in the world, is absolutely critical.

I know that in the minister's previous portfolio, transportation, he viewed the opportunities in transportation and the revolution we could be doing in transportation, particularly around public transportation and the expansion of our electric networks, because in that probably rests the largest single climate change initiative we can do as a government: getting our public transit vehicles off diesel and on to electricity. The electrification of our regional express rail will be an incredibly significant part that we would play to reduce our carbon footprint in this world. It's absolutely critical that we do so.

I know that the minister, when he was Minister of Transportation, embraced that as outside of the confines of a cap-and-trade program. I'm so delighted that our new minister is also participating and moving that file forward in a meaningful way. That's an important part, through the leadership of Premier Wynne, as we coordinate these opportunities to do the right thing for Ontario now, and not just in this term of office but for the generations following us. That's how I believe we are doing things differently and why I'm so proud to be a member of this caucus. I appreciate so very much the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change asking me to assist him in bringing forward this bill, shepherding it through second reading and the committee process and here now to third reading.

The bill was introduced—let me see now—on February 24. Prior to the introduction of this bill, I know that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, my seat-mate, introduced a motion in this House. You could get a sense of the testing of the waters with that motion by where the members opposite stood and where our government stood through the course of the debate. He introduced a motion which made the point that climate change was one of the most important challenges facing our society. We saw, of course, very wise but unanimous support on this side of the House, and we saw third-party support for this bill. We were so disappointed to see how few members of the opposition were able to support that motion, which acknowledged that climate change was an issue that needed to be addressed and that we needed to move forward on a program of cap-and-trade to mitigate and reduce the warming up of the earth. We really would have hoped that, on an issue of this significance, this seriousness, for the future generations of our province—

our children and our grandchildren—we could come forward with a concerted unanimous approach to deal with the issue, confront it head on, not unlike the kind of all-party support one would get as the federal government was moving against aggressors and terrorists or into war, where all parties would recognize how serious the issues were and would come together for the public good.

But we haven't seen that. What we have seen is a direction from the members of the official opposition which completely does not support a cap-and-trade program and we weren't even sure supported the necessity of any kind of carbon pricing, until the new leader was elected and suddenly there was some sort of revelation on the other side of the House that they would support some level of carbon pricing, albeit of the BC tax-and-dividend type of model. As we went through the committee process—after second debate, we went to the committee and I sat in all those committee hearings and I listened very much to all the people who came through and spoke to us about the bill.

One of the most important messages that came from all the delegates that came before us, all the people who had made submissions on behalf of their organizations, individuals and such, environmental groups, was the unanimity of support for the direction that we were taking. It was somewhat profound in that we could now see it: a very broad general consensus that we were on the right track, that linking what we were doing in carbon trade with the Western Climate Initiative—the WCI—with California and Quebec in order to get the right pricing, so that we could have a predictable level of reductions of CO₂ emissions, was broadly agreed to be the right direction to take.

We saw it. I remember the members of the natural gas association were here—and let's be very clear: If you can get natural gas and liquid natural gas, especially from renewable resources like methane that's coming off of the anaerobic digestion of organic waste—getting natural gas as a displacement for coal as an energy source or diesel as an energy source is a big step forward. But I remember putting the question to the natural gas association: "You still are a carbon source." As seductive and sexy as it is to want to get people onto gas, it doesn't really fully go down that route of zero emissions that we need to get to. While it's an improvement, it's not a solution in the longer term. But it could be a stopgap measure in getting to the kind of carbon reductions that we need to see.

This point was hit home very clearly to me in meetings with rural mayors in the Bruce Peninsula area, who were speaking to me as a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, in my rural affairs component, about the importance of getting natural gas piped to all of rural Ontario. I remember one of the mayors saying to me, "You have to understand how expensive it is to heat the homes with electricity. I was sitting in a constituent's kitchen, and the wind was blowing in under the doors and through the window cracks. To keep the heat up in order to warm the place, it was outrageously expensive."

I looked at him and said, “Why don’t we spend the money on renovating the house instead? Why don’t we spend it on proper weather stripping, insulated doors, insulated windows, taking the old drywall off and putting in foam insulation, which will seal the house?” Because the money you spend at doing that, reducing the energy need and continuing to heat with electricity—especially electricity that’s on a 90% carbon-free basis—is far more cost-effective and far more important for the objectives we’re trying to reach in Ontario in reducing our emissions, than it is to put a pipeline in which will be pumping natural gas to those homes. Right?

So, we have to be thinking in those terms in order to make the reductions. If we were to get more communities off of natural gas and onto electricity that was affordable, we’d be way ahead of the game from a carbon emissions point of view.

My own house that I bought recently—I’ve talked about it in the House before. I took a house that was built in 1870, and when my partner and I bought it, we ripped all the walls, everything out of it, and built it brand new from the inside. We maintained the existing frame and brick exterior. It’s a beautiful, historically designated home, so we weren’t allowed to touch the outside. But we replaced all the windows with beautiful double-paned insulated windows, argon-infused, so it reduces even more the amount of heat that transfers into the home. We insulated it with spray foam, taped up all the holes—everything.

Recently I got a gas bill for my house for the month of February. It shows on your gas bill how much your bill was this February and how much it was last February. Well, I didn’t own the house last February—the previous owners were there—but it showed the difference. My gas bill this time was \$85 for the month compared to \$268 the previous month, a reduction of a factor of three, 30% of the energy used to heat the same house, because we had done the renovations and done them properly. That’s an example of how we can use the proceeds from the cap-and-trade program of pricing carbon and put them into dedicated, focused programs that will have a profound impact for the general population and get the kinds of greenhouse gas reductions needed in order to meet our zero-carbon objectives.

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In a way, in a tax-and-dividend structure—the notion being that you put a price on fuel, you put a price on gasoline and then you return all that money back to the consumer, which is the preferred method of the members of the official opposition—you actually achieve somewhat the same result without putting as high a price on carbon, as the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change was explaining, and with a much lower amount of increase because you can take that money and dedicate it back to programs where it can be strategically used for the most benefit.

As the minister was explaining why, under a fee-and-dividend program, the cost of fuel would have to be so much higher to get results, it speaks to, for those of us

who did introductory economics, the whole supply-and-demand equation: that the elasticity of demand for fuel is very low, which means that a price reduction in fuel doesn’t necessarily lead to much of a reduction in consumption. It’s a fairly flat line. We’ve seen that so significantly already in the last year. With the collapse of oil pricing from \$1.35 or \$1.40 a litre in Toronto down to, at times, 92 or 93 cents a litre—even when the price was as high as it was, people were not curtailing their consumption of fuel. You weren’t getting significant greenhouse gas reductions by people not using their cars as often, even when the price of fuel was 40% higher than it currently is.

That speaks to precisely why, as the minister says, in order to receive meaningful reductions in carbon as a result of price impacts only, you have to price it so high as to be prohibitive for people to use, which has an even more devastating effect on the economy and on people’s mobility, etc. If we were able to use a modest increase in the price of gasoline—I think we were estimating, at this stage of the equation, something in the order of 4.3 cents a litre. In the last week, the price of gasoline in my neighbourhood has gone up at least 4.3 cents and probably more like 6 cents from about 98 cents last week. This morning I bought it at \$1.05. That amount of increase, on the basis of this program, is easily absorbed into the economy in a way that allows us to take those proceeds and do a number of things, one of which is to encourage people to buy zero-emission vehicles, electric vehicles, and, second, to buy into an infrastructure program that will see charging stations all up and down major highways in the province so that people who buy an electric vehicle, a zero-emissions vehicle, will be able to take the vehicle on the road, stop for a cup of coffee for half an hour, get a booster charge and continue on their way, the limitation on many electric vehicles being distance.

For most people who are commuting to work, it’s a prescribed distance and a prescribed amount of time. You can plan, with the right battery sizing and the right vehicle, to make that 20-, 30- or 40-kilometre trip and then charge it at the other end. With the proceeds from cap-and-trade, we know that we’re able to do that.

Sitting through the committee hearings, I was pleased when we heard from people about how we could improve the bill. There were something in the order of 220 or 230 amendments that came on to the floor. Many of them, particularly motions that we received from the members of the third-party, were submitted to us well in advance, in communication with us and in consultation with us as members of the government so that we could work with them to find ways to assist them in the kinds of additional changes that they want to do in a way that wouldn’t change the fundamental principles of the bill.

Counter that, Speaker, with the kinds of response we got from the members of the official opposition. Not only did they not respond to the opportunities we had with our staff to ask them to come forward and speak with us about the amendments they wanted to see put forward, but their amendments tended to delete sections of the bill

that would eradicate the central purpose of cap-and-trade, of the linking mechanisms, of the kind of work that we know is critical.

While we accepted something in the order of 60 amendments to the bill, I don't think any of them came from the members of the official opposition because their approach was hostile to the general principles of the bill. They really didn't want us to go down the cap-and-trade route. They preferred the fee-and-dividend, the BC model, which, as the minister explained, isn't working.

Counter that, again, with members of the third party. They did have a number of very significant concerns about oversight, integrity, transparency and support for low-income households, support for First Nations communities as they find a transition. Although we couldn't, in all cases, go as far as they wanted to, we did make a number of motions that supported the kinds of initiatives that were coming forward and incorporated those in the bill.

From our government's perspective, we brought forward something in the order of 70 amendments, a goodly portion of which were technical in nature, because of the French language translations, to get some language consistent, which, in the course of the drafting, hadn't been completely consistent with other acts that it was referring to—quite a responsible opportunity to clarify this, to make the bill more functional.

What we found in committee, again from the members of the official opposition, was a total reluctance to move the bill through committee in an expeditious manner. What we saw was a new level of filibustering, where we'd come to a vote on a very technical amendment—just to change a word in a motion—and the members would call for a 20-minute recess. To do what? To strategize how to vote on a technical change to the amendment, which is what that request is designed for, so you can huddle in your caucus, with your staff, with your expert advisers? No. It was a deliberate attempt to delay the bill as long as they could, not to get it through the committee so it could come back to the House for third reading with, I believe, a sense that if we can delay this long enough, maybe we can't meet the deadlines that would be necessary for us to have our first market—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Auction.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Auction; thank you—market auction for 2017.

It was a disruptive, pre-emptive process, which resulted—in order to recognize that there were timelines, in the normal course of committee hearings and clause-by-clause we would have been able to move through these 200 mostly technical amendments.

We had to then come back to the House and seek timeline closures on the committee process, again tying up this House's time unnecessarily in order to resist this deliberate time-delaying filibuster. Part of that time delay wasn't to essentially limit the debate. We still gave tremendous breadth of opportunity and the hours necessary to allow them to do it, but there would come a point in time we'd have to say enough is enough. And that time

might have been at 11:30 on a Wednesday night if we hadn't finally gotten through the bill.

Fortunately, to their credit, members of the official opposition stopped that level of filibustering as they went into hearings. I know that they love to work late, members of the opposition, as I was prepared to do, but we never had to do those evening sittings because we were able to get the bill through the committee process.

The kinds of changes we did bring into place—we were improving the accountability and transparency of the act. We had a submission from the Financial Accountability Officer. There was concern about his capacity to do a full analysis and oversight of the technical data associated with the kinds of plans and programs that the Minister of the Environment would be recommending to cabinet, that we should be investing the proceeds from the cap-and-trade program. There was a concern. He wanted to have all the background data on all the programs that people were reviewing. We recognize how essentially important it is to have the Financial Accountability Officer have the opportunity to make a full analysis on the decision-making of the government.

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So we crafted a motion, with the assistance of the Financial Accountability Officer, that would satisfy his key objective to have all the information he required for decisions that we took—not for all the decisions that we considered taking, because that's way too wide a breadth, and all the different ideas that come forward get filtered down through our experts, both within the ministry, with the breadth and knowledge that the minister himself brings to the file, and then to his recommendations to the Treasury Board, which becomes in a sense an internal cabinet document.

There is a principle of cabinet confidentiality which we needed to preserve, because it's important that we're allowed to have free and open exchange amongst ourselves at the cabinet stage. But when it comes to the decision-making on the things that we've agreed that we need to do, that will then be subject to the oversight of the Financial Accountability Officer. We thought that was very important, and we accepted that motion and moved forward with it.

We also accepted a number of motions that would protect the personal information of people in the system. We were very clear in the drafting of some motions that only the information necessary to identify persons—in the bill, they would be protected at a freedom-of-information-and-privacy level of protection. Only the information critical to making assessments would be revealed and nothing more.

The minister talked at length about a number of scientists who have done great work in highlighting the difficulty and the dangers that we face going forward. In my little remaining time, I want to talk a little about Dr. James Lovelock.

Dr. James Lovelock has written some seminal books about how Mother Nature operates—the thesis of Gaia, he calls it—and two critical books, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia* and *The Revenge of Gaia*.

Mother Earth doesn't really care who we are, is not in any way empathetic to the human species, and is quite happy to deal with us in a rough and rude manner to the point of our personal extinction. What he does explain in his book and in his thesis is the capacity of Gaia, of Mother Earth, to cushion the effects of climate change through mechanisms around organisms—the trees, the grass, the waters, ice—and give us fair warning of what will happen if we don't heed those warnings.

There comes, however, a tipping point from which there is no return, when the collapse of systems becomes so profound that the very existence of this species, our species, is a threat. That's why getting this bill right is the most important thing we'll do in this session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: First things first: I want to encourage this government to stop their spinning. The member from Beaches–East York stood up and said, “Well, the members from the opposition were heckling,” and he was sharing many assertions. Well, Speaker, you sat through this leadoff in third debate, and did you call us to order? No, not at all. The spinning has to stop.

Perhaps the member from Beaches–East York might do the honourable thing and correct his record, because the manner in which this government is misleading Ontarians is staggering. If they go to the extent of spinning over such a trivial aspect, just imagine what this government is doing with regard to cap-and-trade—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Withdraw.

Speaker, I would go back to assert the fact that the manner in which this government is trying to confuse the Ontario public is unacceptable. If they're going to that extent just over an imaginary aspect of third debate this morning, think about what they're going to be doing for cap-and-trade.

I'll quote the Financial Accountability Officer. He's becoming increasingly alarmed with the manner in which this government is cloaking their cap-and-trade initiative with secrecy. Ontarians should be very alarmed, because this government is choosing to go down a path that has been proven in Europe to be fraught with fraud. The whole cap-and-trade initiative in Europe crashed.

When I was in Paris attending the amazing initiative celebrating how jurisdictions have come together to fight climate change, many jurisdictions, many countries are going, “Why is Ontario going with cap-and-trade? Don't you know how it crashed and was full of fraud?” I just had to shrug my shoulders and say that we have a government that's mismanaged for a decade, is short on cash, and they're using the climate as an excuse to generate a slush fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to make some comments on Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas, in response to both the minister and the member opposite.

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I know who you are and where you're from.

The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change had made some thoughtful comments and sort of categorized people into three groups: the deniers, the ditherers and the defeatists. That's how we started this morning. I was thinking about, perhaps, the opportunists as an additional column where we should maybe classify people.

I also wanted to talk about sitting here listening to the government talk about just how excited they are about the money coming in. I wish that they were so excited about bettering the environment. I wish that was the piece that I took away. I recognize, to the minister's point, that environmental initiatives are going to cost money, but I would like to be clear on the assurances. I want more assurances that the money from this plan is actually going to make its way into environmental initiatives—as he said, to distill it down to the economic benefit, if we're serious about climate change. I would say that we need to distill it down to the purpose. We're supposed to be improving our environment and our situation. That should be the goal of this.

I'm sitting here having interesting conversations with myself about switching to a low-emission vehicle and all of that. When we think about our new vehicles that will be on the horizon and plugging them in to that electricity that's going to cost so much more in the province of Ontario down the road, and watching all of this unfold, I don't know if I'm hopeful. I am anxious, I think, on behalf of the people of Ontario.

Also, to the member from Beaches–East York, sitting around late at night with a glass of wine making important environmental decisions: I'd like to know, were you at the Premier's table with a napkin? This is where our decisions are being made? That's cause for concern.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just want to take exception to the comment that was just made by the member from the NDP. I've sat here for 40 minutes and listened to the Minister of the Environment and the member for Beaches–East York talk about their passion for the environment. To suggest that this is about excitement about money, I think, is misrepresenting what's happening here.

Speaker, a couple of months ago I held something called a youth advisory group meeting. It was the first event that I plan to hold regularly where youth come together and talk about the issues that are important to them. When I held this first meeting a couple of months ago, I heard about a range of issues. I heard about issues around youth unemployment, education and summer jobs, the kinds of things you would expect young people to raise. There were a number of other issues that were raised as well.

What was interesting was that the issue of climate change came up a lot. I think it came up a lot because the next generation is very concerned about this issue of climate change, this issue that our Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is showing tremendous passion

and leadership on. When I think about what this bill is meant to do, this bill really is meant to put into reality the excitement of these two members and our Premier around addressing the issue of climate change. It does it in a very tangible and a responsible way.

There are two elements to the bill that I think the viewers at home should know about. There's a long-term framework for climate action, so there are targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction over the course of a number of years that are very tangible and measurable. There's an old expression: You measure what you treasure. I think that excitement around reducing emissions is baked into this bill by the fact that these targets are set.

The other piece is transparency and accountability around how the proceeds will be managed and used. As someone from a business background who sits on the Treasury Board, I'll be watching that carefully to make sure we do the best we can in how we invest those funds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure, obviously, to be part of the debate on Bill 172. I'd be remiss not to say thank you on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to our critic Lisa Thompson from Huron-Bruce for the great work that she has been doing in the environment portfolio and in particular on this piece of legislation.

I often say, as a Conservative, "Just because you're blue doesn't mean you can't be green." I think that our party has had an important legacy in Ontario as well as in Canada on fighting a number of different environmental barriers, particularly when I look at Brian Mulroney, who joined our caucus a couple of weeks ago to talk to us about his acid rain treaty. I think that was a historic agreement that he created and one that we're very proud of as Progressive Conservatives.

I look at, for example, my seatmate—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The member is hilarious over there, from Beaches-East York, talking about heckling. Of course, he takes the opportunity to heckle me at the same time that I'm trying to talk about the legacies of our party.

When I look, for example, at my own seatmate, Jim Wilson—the opposition House leader, somebody who was among the first to order the closure of coal-fired plants—and my former colleague Elizabeth Witmer, who sat in this House with me for quite some time, who was the health and environment minister at the same time who made that decision to carry that on, those are important things—and the blue box. These are all initiatives that have been important and have been responded to in challenging times by the Progressive Conservative party.

What I find disingenuous from time to time when I listen to the minister and I listen to his government is that they claim to be the only advocates for a safe and clean environment. That is not the truth. As the mother of a daughter in grade 5, she is a steward of the environment, just as I am as a member of provincial Parliament, and

my colleague Lisa Thompson has been an effective advocate in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for final comments.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the members for Huron-Bruce, Oshawa, Etobicoke Centre and Nepean-Carleton for their comments. I'm glad the member talked about Brian Mulroney, who established the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, supported the Experimental Lakes and played a pivotal role in establishing the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development.

Sadly, it was Stephen Harper and the Conservatives in the last decade who closed the national round table, eviscerated those programs and stopped funding it. The only country in the world that pulled out of the Kyoto Protocol and walked away from it was the government of Canada. For the last 10 years, the only government in the world that refused to allow the words "climate change" to be discussed at federal-provincial tables—not even act on; not even use the word—was the Conservative party, of which the leader opposite was a member. If you want to compare Brian Mulroney to Stephen Harper, you've got the two polar opposite ends. It will be interesting to see. It's too bad that Mr. Brown, the member opposite, the leader of the official opposition, seems to come from the latter and not the former.

On the issue, the member from the New Democrats—I actually think this is an existential crisis of incredible proportions. You're a teacher and you know. You look at children every day and I'm sure you do what I do, which is: What kind of planet are we leaving our kids? Can we have an Ontario with a 5- or 6- or 7-degree warmer boreal forest? I don't think we can. I am up in the middle of the night thinking, "How the heck do you manage preventing the boreal forest from becoming a carbon source from being a carbon sink?" It's very complicated.

Just look at Dr. Murray's work—no relation—from Peterborough, from Trent University, or Dr. Keith Grif-fith's, to understand. If you want to understand climate change in a microcosm, understand it in that. The challenge is that hugging a tree doesn't help. Changing the way industry and cars and homes emit: That's why we have to focus on the economy, because it is the changes in the economy that save our environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank all members for listening intently and for active debate this morning.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As you know, we have a tribute today, so we'll get through our introductions.

Mr. Michael Harris: I want to welcome Dennis Yanke from Kitchener–Waterloo today, a member of Advocis. Welcome, Dennis, to the Legislature.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to introduce my friend Eric Barton, from Advocis. Hopefully we can get that golf game in this year.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure for me to welcome the parents of the page captain today, Alfred Shi: his mother Jeanne Ye and his father Lionel Shi. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Today, we are honoured to have with us veterans of the Battle of the Atlantic. Canada lost thousands of courageous officers, sailors and personnel of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Merchant Navy. Today, we have with us Battle of the Atlantic veterans Gordon Casey, Fraser McKee and Joe Duffy.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to welcome Andrew Johnson and Lorraine Graham, who are here from Advocis today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm very pleased to welcome today, in the member's west gallery, Mr. Hickson and Ms. Gratton—they're here with Advocis—from the great riding of Peterborough. I will be meeting with them later this afternoon.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to welcome, also from Advocis, Gord Rymal from the city of North Bay.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome four financial advisers from London West who are here today with Advocis: Chris James, Sara La Gamba, Jamie Asmussen and Brad Unraw.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Also here today from Advocis, in the member's east gallery, from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, is Mr. Mike Skube. Mike, welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I too wish to welcome Andrew Johnson, who is here from Advocis. I look forward to meeting with him later on this afternoon.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Two members of the Financial Advisors Association of Canada are here from Windsor–Tecumseh this morning: Aaron Keogh and Michellyne Mancini. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome all our friends from Advocis here today, particularly the president and CEO, Greg Pollock; chair of the board of directors, Caron Czorny; chair of the government relations committee and a good friend of mine, Kris Birchard; and chair of the provincial advocacy committee, Linda Gratton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Here from Advocis, Durham region: Ron Fennell and Louisa Majoros. Welcome to Queen's Parl.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have some visitors from Nickel Belt. They're here for financial planning. It's Allain Labelle, as well as Charlene Faiella.

While I'm up, Speaker, there are also representatives from the Alzheimer Society: their executive director, David Harvey; Lauren Rettinger and Gagan Gill. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm pleased to introduce a number of Advocis members from Ottawa. I was pleased to meet with them this morning: Jacques Duplain, Kirk Wrinn, John Saikaley, Angela Houle, David McGruer and Rob Stewart.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome, from Advocis, Dan Willett, Gary Laakso and James Maclean from the Simcoe-Muskoka branch of Advocis.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to welcome all the youth and their chaperones who are in the public gallery today. I believe we're going to have over 150 of them here to celebrate Youth Civics Day.

I'd also like to welcome Avanthi Goddard, president of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies.

I'll be meeting them all at a reception in a committee room after question period.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome Dawn Kennedy from South Bruce. She's here with Advocis today.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome our two interns, Aamer and Farnaz. I look forward to working with them.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I would like to welcome everyone from Advocis here today, including Sean Lawrence from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Chris Hudson, Dwight Hickson and Brent Holmes from Advocis who are here today from Durham. Welcome.

I would also like to welcome Marg Cartwright and Jackie Forsey who are here from Clarington with the MEAO. Welcome.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I had the pleasure this morning to meet with David Wilton and David Coad, who are here with Advocis at Queen's Park today.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On behalf of my colleague the great member from Kingston, I would like to welcome to the Legislature from the Advocis Kingston chapter, the president, Will Britton; past president Ed Bettencourt; membership chair, Greg Gies; professional development chair, Jim Jodoin; Rita Dillon; and Gordon French. Welcome.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I would like to welcome some members from Advocis who met with me this morning: Kirk Wrinn, Rob Stewart, David McGruer, Ali Pahlavani and Kevin O'Connor. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Lauren Tedesco, my director of communications—who I think ended up upstairs somewhere, maybe—has got some family members here today: her mom, Glenda Tedesco; her grandma Audrey Mair; and her aunt Debbie Mair. Welcome.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to welcome a good friend of mine here today: Michael Camacho from Advocis, who is in the public gallery. Welcome, Michael.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: From my riding of Barrie, I wish to welcome Dan Willett and James Maclean of Advocis to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like to welcome all of the financial advisors, especially Philip Wild and Shannon Neely from Quinte Advocis.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to introduce my good friend Moyra Haney, who is a member of the Naval Club, which is in my riding of Beaches–East York, and Joe Duffy, who is a constituent. They're here for the Battle of the Atlantic tribute.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am happy to welcome MEAO here, and I'm even going to pronounce it: the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I too would like to welcome Mr. Phil Wild, a financial planner from the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West. Welcome.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to do further introductions. The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my colleague Michael Harris's birthday, and I would like to wish him a happy birthday on behalf of all members of this assembly.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ajax–Pickering on a point of order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that you will find we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of the work done by the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ajax–Pickering is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to have a moment of silence in honour of those we lost during the Battle of the Atlantic, Canada's largest military engagement during the Second World War.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition is seeking a moment's silence. Do we agree?

I would ask all members of the House to please rise for a moment of silence to pay tribute.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Pray be seated.

1040

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would the members please join me in welcoming the family of the late Leo Jordan, MPP for Lanark–Renfrew during the 35th and 36th Parliaments, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: his daughters Valerie Wilson, Anne Marie Simard and her husband, Guy, and Helen McGuire and her husband, Mike; his son, John Jordan, and his wife,

Brenda-Leah; and his grandchildren Christopher, Stephen, Shamus, Maryanne, Jordan, David, Justen, Amanda and Emily. We welcome them to the House.

Also in the Speaker's gallery is Mr. Steve Gilchrist, MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments, and Mr. Norm Sterling, MPP for the Carleton ridings from the 31st to the 39th—there are too many numbers in there for Parliaments. Thank you very much.

LEO JORDAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Good morning, Speaker. Thank you. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Leo Jordan, former member for Lanark–Renfrew, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's an honour to speak about Leo Jordan today.

If you were to sum up the thousands of life lessons that are accumulated over the average lifetime, be they negative or positive, they basically fall into two categories. First, there are the how-tos, the things that we're encouraged to emulate or adapt to our own journey. These are the ideal takeaways from our interactions with family, friends, colleagues and even, in many cases, complete strangers.

The other category is a bit more complicated. These are the lessons that are borne of our challenges and our hardships, and I'll call them the "how to do better." It is these types of lessons—the often painful kind—that usually have the greatest impact. Arguably, it's when we have to pick ourselves up that we are most inspired to reach beyond ourselves to ensure that our lives are not defined by our difficulties, but by the ability to overcome them.

In many cases, our lives are enriched by a special set of people, those who take hardship and difficulty and craft them into exemplary lives for all of the right reasons. These are the type of people whose conduct is not only worthy of our admiration, but who provide us with something to aspire to.

I never had the privilege of meeting Leo Jordan, but in our research for today, it's clear that he was the type of person who did his best to make the best of his hardships and then use them and those lessons to benefit those around him.

In both his political and personal life, Leo understood that it was essential to be someone that people could count on, an experience that was shaped early in childhood by the untimely death of his father. The tragedy pulled his family closer together and had an indelible impact on young Leo. Whether it was his long career at

Ontario Hydro, his time in both municipal and provincial office or at home with his family, it was clear that he gave his all to those he was dedicated to.

Leo took great pride in his ability to get things done for the good people of Lanark–Renfrew, regardless of who was in power. Although he was one of the few new PC MPPs elected in the NDP sweep of 1990, his riding received record investment, despite the Tories' third-party status. In the wake of the 1998 ice storm, he made it his mission to ensure that those affected received the funding they were entitled to in order to help the community and region get back on its feet.

Not surprisingly, Leo's provincial career was arguably at its best at a time that the PC Party fought to free itself from third-party status. Drawing on the lessons learned during the adversity of his childhood, Leo and his colleagues rallied around one another as they worked to achieve their goal of government.

While Leo wasn't a household name, his hard work, positive attitude and integrity were the foundational elements of success. After his death, Senator Bob Runciman, one of Leo's former caucus colleagues and a close friend, spoke fondly of their time together and the bonds formed during these challenging times.

Depending on your perspective, the Harris years were either the best of times or the worst of times, but I'm sure that even Mike Harris himself would agree that things would have been done differently if he knew in advance that the riding redistribution would cost him one of his most effective MPPs. In the wake of boundary changes, Leo lost his seat in a faceoff with Liberal stalwart Sean Conway in the new riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

But Leo's defeat did not mark the end of a career; it ushered in a new era of a regional elder statesman for the PC Party. Leo transitioned from being an effective MPP to being a mentor and resource for a new generation of PC MPPs from eastern Ontario, giving freely of his time and experience in order to ensure that his community maintained a strong presence at Queen's Park.

In life, Leo Jordan worked diligently to make a difference in eastern Ontario, and in death, it was no different, as people paid tribute to his contributions by giving to the Tri-County Dental Coalition, an agency dedicated to ensuring access to dental services for the people of Leeds, Grenville and Lanark, regardless of age or income.

When the news of Leo's passing first emerged, the tributes from his PC colleagues were expected but no less impactful. But praise came from the other side of the aisle as well, with former Premier and MP Bob Rae eulogizing his former political adversary as a "fine man and a great MPP."

Today, we're privileged to have Leo's children and grandchildren here for this special occasion. While your father's name and grandfather's name is the one in the history books, it's an honour you share because you were clearly the inspiration for the work that he did. From what I read, Leo struck me as the type of person who would downplay any accolades. Instead, it's more likely

that the tribute that would bring him the greatest joy is the pride that you take in the contributions he made to his community and his province. Thank you for being here today.

On behalf of Ontario's NDP, we salute the life and work of Leo Jordan. Thank you for sharing Leo with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes?

Mr. John Fraser: It's an honour to say a few words on behalf of the Liberal caucus about Leo Jordan, the former MPP from Lanark–Renfrew.

Born in 1929 in Almonte, he grew up on a farm and had a farm himself. He was educated at local schools and at Carleton. He worked for Ontario Hydro for 39 years. He was involved with the Victorian Order of Nurses, the Smith Falls property standards association, parent-teacher associations—and that was all before he became an elected member here in this Legislature. He was also the reeve of Montague township.

First elected in September 1990, he served as the critic for energy, mines and natural resources and on several standing committees. In 1995 he won the general election, and in 1997 he was appointed as PA to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

As I said before, prior to that he worked for 39 years at Ontario Hydro. It's not what we do here as much as what we bring here. What we bring as members is our experience and, most importantly, our community. His experience at Hydro—I dug up a news release from about 12 years ago which says, "Leo Jordan stated that Ontario Hydro's recently announced profit of \$665 million for the first six months of 1994 still fails to address the utility's massive debt problem." That was a bit prescient. It took a bit more than a decade to fix that. That's what he brought there. What he brought from Hydro, too, was his experience in customer service and serving people and understanding what the needs of people are.

He ran in 1999, with redistribution—and as the member from Kitchener said, I think if Mike Harris had had a second thought he might have changed that redistribution, because he had a great member. He ran against one of our members, Sean Conway, and was not successful.

Here is a real mark to how he was viewed in this Legislature. These are comments from Sean Conway: "I was very saddened to hear of Leo's passing recently. Leo and I served together in the Legislature for the same area of rural eastern Ontario during the 1990s and I got to know him well. He had a great sense of humour and could always find the fun in just about any situation...."

"But most of all, Leo and his wonderful wife Thecla loved being with people. Whether it was a parade, a picnic, or just walking down the Main Street of Smiths Falls, Lanark village or Arnprior, they made themselves at home and were open and friendly with everyone they met. In fact, one of my most vivid memories of Leo will always be of his standing in line at the annual church supper at Mount St. Patrick, the historic capital of the Irish in the Ottawa Valley.

"I can see him clearly in my mind's eye, standing there with a broad smile on his face and knowing that he

was about to get a great meal and take one step closer to heaven! A good man who served his community well in so many different capacities. We thank him and his marvellous family for his and their service."

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As I said, Mr. Speaker, it's what we bring here. The two things we can do are to bring our community to Queen's Park and be the representative of the people and speak on things like ensuring that people get the compensation they deserved through the ice storm, or if they have a problem, that that problem gets fixed. It's also what we do in our communities: be accessible and welcoming to all those people we represent, whether we agree with them or not.

I think that all of us, when we consider tributes—and especially a tribute like today's to Leo—need to consider and think about what they're going to say about us. I know for myself, I feel that if people say about me what we're going to hear today about Leo, I'll feel that I've been a success.

I want to thank his family for being here today. He's left a legacy here and in his community, and you're his legacy as well. It's an honour to say a few words.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Leo Jordan left a legacy of faith, family, dignity and servant leadership when he departed this life on February 15 last year. For those of us who were privileged to know him, work with him, call him a friend and, indeed, love him, there are many special memories.

One of his close friends who was also a professional colleague remembered Leo this way: "He had a strong and persistent sense of his responsibility as an elected member, always aware of the fact that his role was to serve his constituents, and he selflessly put their needs first. He acted not just for those who voted for him but for all the people of Lanark–Renfrew.

"He had a rock-solid work ethic, making sure that every effort was made to see projects through for the people of Lanark–Renfrew. He was unrelenting on their behalf. He never gave up.

"He was a true leader, which was reflected in the method and manner of his service as a member of provincial Parliament. At Queen's Park, he developed a keen ability to navigate the system in order that he could work with people who were willing to make a positive difference. He could humbly win their support for his constituents' needs, regardless of what party they belonged to or what positions they held."

I can attest to that, Mr. Speaker. One time when we were in government, Leo was pushing and pushing and pushing for a satellite dialysis service for the Renfrew hospital. He was absolutely relentless. I heard all about it, not only from him, but I also heard the other side of the story from the health minister who was the subject of his incessant lobbying—and remember, we were in government. He'd come up to me and say, "We've done all the homework. We've made our case. Why won't she just approve it? Why is she being so stubborn?"

The next day, the Minister of Health would come up to me and say, "Leo won't listen. We have to make these decisions as part of an overall coordinated provincial plan. We can't do one-offs for Leo. Why is he being so stubborn?" Eventually, of course, Leo got his way and the dialysis service was approved. And yes, the Minister of Health got her way as well, announcing it was going to be part of a coordinated plan to bring dialysis services closer to home.

Another time, in the early 1990s, when the New Democrats were in office and we were called the third party in this House, we were complaining in question period that government funding for all manner of projects was going disproportionately to NDP-held ridings—imagine that—with the opposition-held ridings, our ridings, getting peanuts.

Premier Bob Rae responded to our questions in the House. "That allegation is poppycock," he said. "We're not favouring our ridings ahead of the other ridings. In fact, there is no riding in the province that's receiving more attention and government funding than the riding of Lanark–Renfrew, which of course is Progressive Conservative." Leo immediately leapt to his feet and shouted, "Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has just made a statement and I need to respond. The Premier is absolutely right." Then he sat down. Confrontation if need be, then compromise and collaboration: That's how Leo got things done.

In preparation for today, I shared memories of Leo with the member for Leeds–Grenville, who wanted to be here, but was very sorry he couldn't due to a constituency commitment. Steve Clark told me that Leo had attended his nomination meeting in 2010, unannounced and without fanfare, as was Leo's way. Steve had just begun his speech, and he made eye contact with the people in the crowded hall that night in Brockville and saw Leo near the front. Leo smiled and nodded, and it gave Steve an overwhelming boost that someone he respected and admired so much was there for him, and the realization that no matter what the outcome, all would turn out well.

I also remembered Leo recently with my good friend Gary Carr, who was the former MPP for Oakville South and, as you know, Mr. Speaker, sat in that chair, and is now the regional chair of Halton. Because the three of us were first elected as part of the class of 1990—Leo, Gary and I—we were seatmates together for years. The three amigos, maybe—three stooges to some, perhaps, on the other side of the House; I don't know. But Gary remembered Leo as a real gentleman. He said that Leo was one of a kind. "They broke the mould after Leo Jordan," he added.

I suggested that Leo always seemed to me to be more a parliamentarian than a politician, such was his deep and profound respect for our democratic institutions and the democratic values that give them life. He understood the roles of the sovereign, the Lieutenant Governor, the Premier, the cabinet, the Legislature, the judiciary, the public service, and our agencies, boards and commissions, and how these institutions, taken together, are charged

with the responsibility of providing good government for the people.

Prior to his election to the Legislature, Leo had a distinguished 39-year career at Ontario Hydro, as was mentioned already. No MPP in the modern era has had a better or more complete understanding of how our electricity system works and how it should work. He loved to talk about it and to explain how important Sir Adam Beck's principle of power at cost and of safe, reliable and affordable power had been to the history of Ontario—to our development, our economy and our industry. He was extremely knowledgeable as critic to the Minister of Energy, and he never needed a briefing. He knew more about hydro than the rest of us put together.

In government from 1995 to 1999, he served with the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, with special leadership responsibilities for tourism. There, he led the implementation of tourism-oriented directional signs, or TOD signs, as they were called. We see these signs on our highways today, helping tourists find their destination. He also successfully fought to give tourism operators better access to the credit they need.

But his constituents always came first. Big accomplishments like the dialysis service in Renfrew, which I mentioned earlier; bringing four lanes to Arnprior; Highway 416; Highway 417; and his work to keep the Perth hospital from closing by proposing consolidation of administration: All went alongside the day-to-day advice and assistance that he loved to offer his people.

Thus far in my remarks, I've spoken about Leo Jordan's public life, but as is the case for all of us, there is much more to Leo than his public persona. He wasn't just a great MPP; he was also a great man—good, decent, caring and honest. I was reminded recently of something I had observed years ago but had forgotten, I have to say. Leo always made an effort to be in the chamber every day when the proceedings started so as to be present for the beautiful opening prayer that we used to recite daily—that we recited today, Mr. Speaker—followed by the Lord's prayer. He saw it as a time for quiet reflection and a daily ritual of faith that set the tone for the remainder of the day.

While Leo was a modest and self-effacing man, he never sought to draw attention to himself. However, his family—wife Thecla; their daughters Anne Marie, Leona, Helen and Valerie, son John and their spouses; and their grandchildren—were a source of immense pride. We welcome the Jordan family here today. I don't have to tell you how much he loved you all, but I can tell you that he never stopped talking about your accomplishments, the outstanding people you had grown to become, and how blessed he felt to have such a wonderful family.

Until her untimely passing, Thecla was always at Leo's side, whether at community events in the riding, making many weekly trips to Toronto by train, or managing the household at their magnificent Kellordan Farms on Kelly-Jordan Road in Montague township near Smiths Falls. There they hosted annual summer barbecues that would attract close to 1,000 people.

Leo and Thecla were as devoted to each other as any married couple you would ever meet, with a relationship built on faith, love, mutual respect, their children's upbringing and helping with their grandchildren.

Leo was very proud of one other thing that I should mention here today. He was very proud to be a son of rural Ontario and the Ottawa Valley. In our farms and countryside and in our small villages and towns, he saw the values of family and church. He saw the values of hard work and self-reliance, balanced with leisure and community. In short, he saw the values that built Ontario and made us the leader of the country.

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We often talked about this and how privileged we both felt to serve and lead in our respective communities. We all know there are good days and bad days in this place. I remember one time, when I was feeling quite discouraged, I confided in Leo and told him I was feeling down and was questioning why I was even here and whether my efforts were making a difference. Leo's reply was as firm as it was principled and wise. "Never forget this," he said. "You're not here because you wanted to be here. You're here because the people of your riding sent you here."

The same could be said to all of us. Let us never forget that. And let us always remember Leo Jordan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their very thoughtful and heartfelt comments. The tribute to Leo Jordan is well received.

I would like to tell the family that you will be receiving a hard copy of Hansard and a DVD as part of your keepsake for our affection for Leo. We thank you for the gift of Leo.

ORAL QUESTIONS

NURSES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. But first, I want to thank the over 150,000 nurses in Ontario as they celebrate Nursing Week 2016. I believe that all registered nurses, nurse practitioners, registered practical nurses and nursing students deserve our praise each and every day. I will stand with the nursing profession as they have faced unprecedented cuts by this government.

Everywhere I travel in the province, I hear about nursing cuts: In Timmins, dozens of jobs cut; at Trillium Health Partners in Mississauga, 15 RNs just cut; at Runnymede health centre in Toronto, half the RNs have been cut. This is just a small fraction of the 1,400 nurses fired in the last year.

I'm not interested in a history lesson of what the government did 15 years ago or 50 years ago. My question is, why have you fired 1,400 nurses in the last year?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. There's an indication that things are going to ramp up, and I will bring it down.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I certainly understand why the Leader of the Opposition wouldn't want to talk about the past. He wouldn't want to talk about the record of that party when they were in office, nor would he want to talk about the nine years that he spent in the Stephen Harper government when the health accord was cut. I understand why he doesn't want to talk about that, so let's talk about the facts. Let's talk about the fact that since 2003, more than 26,000 nurses, including 11,000 registered nurses, have begun work in Ontario. Let's talk about the fact that, year over year, we have increased health care funding, including \$1 billion this year, of which \$345 million is for hospitals.

There is a consistent trend line. In 2015, the number of nurses employed in nursing in Ontario increased for the 11th consecutive year. Those are the facts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Last week, at a town hall meeting in Sault Ste. Marie, residents and front-line workers shared with the Sault Star the horror stories of the Liberal cuts. Glenda Hubley, president of the Ontario Nurses' Association Local 46, apologized on behalf of all front-line employees. Despite the fact that they "do their best amid extreme pressures under which they work," sometimes they can't do it alone. But this government is forcing them to do it alone. Our front-line workers deserve better. Our patients deserve better.

Again to the Premier: Why did you let go 1,400 nurses last year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, I know that the people of Sault Ste. Marie are very happy with their new hospital and all the services that it's providing. I know they're happy with their nurse-practitioner-led clinic and the family health teams as well that are providing excellent care due to the excellent work of those front-line health care workers. But it is simply not true that we're cutting the number of nurses in any sector, because when you look at just the hospital sector alone between 2011 and 2015, the net increase—because I know that both opposition parties like to talk about the gross, just the layoffs and not the new hires. But when you look at the net change between 2011 to 2015 just on nurses in our hospital sector, it increased by 7,625 positions, the majority of them RNs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Final supplementary, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Sometimes I wonder what fantasy world this government lives in. You've got the Minister of Finance saying hydro rates are going down and you have the Minister of Health saying he isn't cutting nurses despite the fact that 1,400 were fired last year, 1,400 that we desperately needed.

Let me point out another example, in Simcoe county. At Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, 16 beds were just cut; 35 people fired. The numbers don't lie. The hospital cuts we're seeing in every hospital in Ontario do not lie.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Simcoe county deserve better. The residents of Rama First Nation served by Soldiers' Memorial deserve better. Will the Liberals reverse the cuts at Soldiers' Memorial? Will they do the right thing and support our nurses?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: In fact, the changes that have been made at Orillia soldiers' hospital were the result of a recommendation coming from the LHIN but also from a provincial rehabilitation association that looks at complex continuing care. It looks at how they can actually bring those services and those supports closer to people in their communities. One aspect of the decision at soldiers' hospital was a result of the provincial Rehabilitative Care Alliance and the LHIN and the hospital itself, realizing that they could shift support closer to the communities where that complex continuing care is made. That's what's happening. It's actually an improvement in the services that Ontarians can expect.

It's unfortunate that, unlike almost all of his colleagues in the PC Party—I wish the leader of the official opposition would actually come to me if he has concerns about hospitals across the province.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Since I can't get an answer on the 1,400 nursing cuts, I'll try something else. I want to read to you a subheadline from an editorial—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Come to order. Please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I want to read from an editorial in the Toronto Star this past weekend. It read, "The government wants to reduce wait-list times for intensive treatment for autism. Unfortunately, it is doing so by simply cutting kids on the wait-list who are over five. That's not fair."

This government's idea of helping children with autism is taking them off of one wait-list and putting them on another. It's not too late for this government to reverse course and do the right thing. Will the Premier listen to the fine folks of the Toronto Star on their recommendation and fund autism for families for families that need it? Fund IBI.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: They are fine folks at the Toronto Star, as are all our media gallery. But I will say that on this, it's very important that we understand exactly what is happening, and that is that there are children who have been sitting on a waiting list not getting service. The status quo is unacceptable. It is unacceptable to us, on this side of the House, that children who need therapy in a window of time, as they develop, not get that therapy.

So Mr. Speaker, we are investing in the system so that those children will get the service that they need. We are working with the families, the service providers are working with the families, and the education system is working with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, because we know that helping those children through the transition, making sure they get the intensive service when they need it and that they are then able to be socialized in school—that is what children need, Mr. Speaker. It's up to us to make sure we get them off a waiting list and into that transition.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: If the Premier is not going to listen to the editorial of the Toronto Star, maybe the Premier will listen to Michael Barrett, president of Ontario Public School Boards' Association. He said, "It's never too late to correct a mistake." Cutting IBI treatment for children over five is a mistake. It is a mistake to take the chance for IBI treatment away from a five-year-old like Keith in Toronto. His mom called these changes "devastating" to her child's future, and she said these devastating cuts to Keith's treatments are "heart-breaking."

Mr. Speaker, why is this Premier, why is this government, taking away IBI from children who desperately need it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I just said, what we are doing is we are working to ensure that 16,000 more children get service, that the service that the children get is tailored to their needs, that they move off the waiting list, that they have the opportunity to immediately start to buy services and that they make a transition into new service that is tailored to their needs based on a clinical assessment. That is of much more benefit to a child than sitting on a waiting list.

Quite frankly, I don't understand why either of the opposition parties would want to see children languish on a waiting list, getting no service, when they know perfectly well that kids need service early and they need it continuously.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You were the minister who was going to put IBI in schools, weren't you? What happened to that?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Leader of the third party, come to order, please.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I will go back to this Toronto Star editorial that I mentioned earlier. To quote the Toronto Star, "To suddenly strip children and families of the hope to which they have clung, sometimes for years, is too cruel a way to save money or find efficiencies."

"Too cruel." Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this move by the government is. The Toronto Star is right when they say it is cruel. Thousands of families waited for years and then, with a stroke of a pen, this govern-

ment ripped away any ounce of hope that these families had.

Will the Premier put herself in the shoes of these families that you have kicked off the list? Will you give them the hope they need, the hope they deserve? Will the Premier do the right thing? It's not too late. Will you fund IBI for kids over five? Autism doesn't end at five.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: One thing we can agree on here, I think, is that we do want to give hope to those children. We want to give hope to families. It's important to note that we are not taking kids away from service who are on that wait-list. We are putting them into service, Speaker, and our service providers will work very closely with those families.

In terms of education, the Minister of Education and I and our staffs are working together. I read the Michael Barrett article. I know him personally, and I know the Minister of Education does. We're reaching out to him to make sure he has all the facts and the information about how we're going to continue to give hope to these kids, how we are not going to accept that there are wait-lists for potentially up to five years by 2018. I think nobody wants to see that.

It's very important that we work with our education partners, because many of these kids are school-aged or will be becoming school-aged very shortly. We want to support them through that transition.

NURSES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. When families are at their most vulnerable, they count on a nurse to be there, but for the last 16 months nurses have been fired at a rate of 90 a month. That's three per day. That is unacceptable.

Will this Premier make a clear commitment that no more registered nurses will get a pink slip, no more registered practical nurses will get a pink slip and no more nurse practitioners in this province will get a pink slip?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I refer to the answer I have already given and will repeat that: We have, year over year, increased the number of nurses—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —in the system. We have increased the amount of money that goes into health care. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has made it clear that between 2011 and 2015, over 7,000 nurses were hired and placed in this province.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that if you look at the changes that are being made in the system, it's true: There are services that are moving out of hospitals and

into the community or in some cases moving closer to communities, and that means changes. That means changes in personnel; it means changes in location. But it doesn't mean fewer health care providers. In fact, it means more health care providers as we increase service across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On Friday, the Premier was touring an Ottawa hospital, but on the other side of the city, in another Ottawa hospital, nurses were given notice of more layoffs. Queensway Carleton Hospital told staff that five full-time and one part-time nurse from the child-birth program would be laid off, and a full-time team leader in surgery would also be eliminated.

Fewer nurses means less care and longer wait times for the people of Ottawa. Make no mistake: This Premier is directly responsible. Cutting nurses is the wrong thing to do. Patients know it, families know it, New Democrats know it and nurses know it.

On Nursing Week, how can this Premier defend another round of Liberal cuts to front-line nurses in Ottawa?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I wish we could at least agree on one thing: that we choose an independent source for the statistics that we provide in this Legislature, that we don't talk about gross numbers or layoffs without talking about the new positions added. I would hope that we could agree—and it's transparent for all Ontarians to see—that the College of Nurses of Ontario publishes on an annual basis the statistics for nurses in this province.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Those nurses don't have jobs.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, if you don't want to believe the College of Nurses of Ontario, that's your choice.

But they've indicated in the last year alone almost 3,000 new nursing positions in this province—net new. They have published in the last five years almost 8,000 net new positions in our hospitals, the majority of them RNs.

I would choose to believe the college on these. I would implore the opposition parties to do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Since 2012, the Liberals have taken \$100 million out of Ottawa Hospital's budget—that's a fact—forcing that hospital to cut front-line health care workers year after year. That, too, is a fact. Over at CHEO, another 27 full-time positions had to be cut last year—another fact.

And now, on Friday, the health minister admitted that this year's funding for Ottawa's hospitals, like Hôpital Montfort, will not keep up with inflation and population growth—another fact. It will not repair the damage; it will not stop the cuts to nursing. In fact, it means another year of cuts to health care in Ottawa.

Why won't this Premier do the right thing and put a stop to any more nursing cuts in Ontario's hospitals?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It is true that on Friday the Premier and I—I was honoured to be with her at Montfort Hospital—announced new funding, an increase of \$19 million for the Ottawa hospitals.

It is also a fact that by any indicator, according to the College of Nurses of Ontario, we have more RNs working in this province than since we came into office, we have more RPNs, and we have more nurse practitioners. Whether it's per capita or absolute numbers, it has increased.

History is an important lesson and when you have an opposition, a third party—3,000 RNs lost their jobs when they were in power, when they cut funding to hospitals in the last year of their time in government, when they closed 24% of the acute hospital beds in this province. I'm not going to take my lesson from a party with that kind of record.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you. Start the clock.

New question.

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HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Last Friday I was in Sarnia. I met an elderly couple who moved to Sarnia because the health care in their hometown of Wallaceburg had faced so many cuts that they wanted to live in a place where they thought they could be sure that they would be able to actually age with dignity. Now that they're in Sarnia, the hospital is being forced to cut \$5 million from its budget, and the total number of hospital workers cut over the past four years will reach 80. The hospital will still face a \$1.7-million shortfall. This elderly couple thought that they could find security by moving. People can't get away from the cuts, though.

Will this Premier do the right thing and ensure that hospitals are not being forced to cut?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, Mr. Speaker, we're increasing our funding to hospitals across this province by \$345 million this year. That represents a 2.1% increase in the line in the budget for our hospital funding.

It includes Bluewater Health in Sarnia. In fact, Bluewater is doing better than the provincial average because they're receiving an additional \$3.5 million this year, an increase in their operating budget. That represents a 2.73% increase in their operating budget.

The facts are that we continue to invest in our health care system, an additional \$1 billion this year; \$345 million of that is going into the operating expenses of hospitals at a 2% increase. That doesn't even begin to talk about the enormous capital investment that we're making across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Sarnia isn't just cutting another 11 jobs. They're not just facing another \$5 million in cuts. The complex continuing care unit is being forced to close eight beds.

To the Premier, her minister and the governing Liberals, this may be all about spin but to the people it's about health. It's about the health care of their families and the availability of services in their community hospitals. Will this Premier actually face up to the silent crisis that the Liberals are creating in the health care system and put a stop to the hospital cuts right here and right now?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I mentioned, we continue to invest. I want to talk about the capital investments that were outlined in our budget recently passed because, over the next decade, we're investing \$12 billion in hospital renovations and expansions and, in many cases, brand new hospitals right across this province. It's an important investment, but we also recognize that hospitals have ongoing maintenance costs and small redevelopment and renovation costs. So we've increased by \$50 million in this year's budget the funds that we put towards those renovations.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we expect our local hospital administrations and their boards, together with our LHINs and together with the ministry, to make decisions which ensure that the quality of services and care are of the best possible quality. That's our goal, and we work hard to achieve that across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, those hospitals are going to have a hard time serving patients when there aren't any nurses at the bedside. For the last three years, per capita health spending on hospitals in Ontario has fallen. The last time that happened was in 1997, and Mike Harris was the Premier.

Today, just like in 1997, hospitals are being forced to close beds, fire nurses, cancel surgeries and treat people in conference rooms and hallways. That's what's happening here in the province of Ontario: treatment in conference rooms and in hallways because of Liberal cuts to our hospital system.

When will this Premier stop cutting hospitals, stop firing nurses, and make sure Ontarians can count on our hospitals and our health care system?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Finally, Mr. Speaker, something we can agree on: the fact that the PC Party, when they were in power—there were 6,000 fewer nurses working at the end of their tenure as government. There were 3,000 fewer nurses as well working when the NDP left government compared to the beginning.

Mr. Speaker, what concerns me is that in their last election platform, they committed to finding \$600 million in savings. In fact, the member for Kitchener-Water-

loo, when pressed on the issue by the CBC, admitted that those savings would be found in health care and in education. She went on to say, in fact, that she would go first to health to find that \$600 million in savings. There is no doubt there would have been dramatic, drastic cuts if they would have won that election.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Last week, the minister was forced to backtrack on his negative comments towards the province's auto sector. Despite his swings at the auto sector, we know that under the government's Green Investment Fund, they're using cap-and-trade money to build charging stations.

Now, we're glad that he saw the light on the auto sector after being taken to the woodshed, but why is he giving millions of dollars of contracts to Hydro-Québec to install electric vehicle charging stations when there are plenty of Ontario companies that can do the job? Why are you doing that, Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm sure my colleague the Minister of Transportation would also like to make a comment about this, but let's just get the record straight: I, unlike the member opposite—members over here have voted for the largest investments in our auto sector in the history of Canada. I'm very proud to have worked with the auto sector, and without the support of the party opposite, who doesn't want to see any revenue come out of cap-and-trade for the auto sector, we're about to repeat that and make another massive investment in building the Ontario auto sector and the infrastructure to support it.

I need no lessons from the member opposite on being a champion for the auto sector. When he can hold his voting record to be anywhere near members on this side for the auto sector—because you didn't learn your lesson, and you're opposing the cap-and-trade system that will deliver unprecedented investments in innovation, in market development, in modernization of plants and in developing new markets for Ontario's automobile—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: He refuses to answer the first question. First we give free hydro to Quebec, and now we're going to have them build our charging stations?

The minister has had to backtrack on comments made about the nuclear industry, agriculture and the auto sector, all in one week. Now the Premier's office won't even let him speak to the Toronto board of trade because he's too much of a liability. It's one thing to say something ill-informed, but it's another to act on it.

If the minister thinks it's best to take money in the Green Investment Fund, money that is raised from the taxpayers of Ontario, and invest it in contracts to other jurisdictions to build charging stations, then answer this: How much money from the Green Investment Fund,

money from the people of Ontario, is going to contracts signed with other jurisdictions?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Minister of Transportation, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member of the opposition for this question, however misguided it might be. A number of weeks ago, I was proud to stand in Mississauga here in Ontario—a wonderful community—to announce how we were proceeding with the \$20 million that we announced back in December to build 500 electric vehicle charging stations by 2017 across the province of Ontario.

This will no doubt lead to a reduction in what we call range anxiety for those individuals who want to make that choice, in their efforts collectively to help us fight climate change, to purchase a zero-emissions vehicle. I would have thought that that member and the Conservative caucus would have supported an initiative that would build a network of fast and traditional chargers in every corner of the province.

I was proud to be in Mississauga at a company called KSI. We will see charging stations at Tim Hortons, McDonald's, Ikeas and so many other places across this province. This member should support it.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Today, we learned that during the Premier's first two years in office, her party held nearly 100 big-ticket fundraisers. They promised face time with cabinet ministers, raising over \$12 million.

A fundraiser last year was hosted by the very same Bay Street insiders who will benefit from the sale of Hydro One. Also remarkable was that those donors were promised access to both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy, the ministers who made the Hydro One sell-off possible.

Now Ontarians should be able to trust that the government makes decisions with respect to energy based on the best interests of the public, not the best interests of the Liberal Party or its donors.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, second time.

1130

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is, will the government launch a public inquiry into the energy sector contracts of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said and as we are acting on, we are committed to changing political donations in Ontario. The information that the member of the third party is talking about is public information, and the reporter recounted the events and wrote a story about it, and that's fine.

But I hope that the leader of the third party still agrees with the position that we should ban corporate and union donations. I don't know if the leader of the third party's position has changed, because she won't talk to us about

what her perspective is on the draft legislation that would come forward.

In fact, last week, the government House leader had a very productive meeting with the PC House leader and a representative of the Green Party. In that meeting, we provided a briefing on the draft legislation and asked for their feedback and ideas before the bill was introduced into the Legislature. The only party that wasn't represented was the NDP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Liberal donors are getting rewarded with massive private energy contracts while the people of Ontario are seeing their electricity bills skyrocket.

Meanwhile, of the five OPP investigations into this government, two of them that are under way deal with Liberal employees allegedly deleting evidence that might show that the government made decisions with the energy sector that were politically motivated, as opposed to the benefit of the public. Now two Liberal employees have already been charged criminally.

It's time to clear the air, much like in Quebec with the Charbonneau inquiry. My question is, will the government commit to a public inquiry into the energy sector here in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: With respect to the procurement surrounding the IPO, as the members know, we had the Auditor General of Canada, Denis Desautels, establish the process for procurement and assess the procurement as we went through it.

From his final report: "On the basis of the work just described, I have concluded that the process followed for the selection of the members of the IPO syndicate and for determining the structure of the syndicate was a fair process and was carried out in a fair and professional manner."

The quote says, "No conflict of interest issues were identified, whether in relation to members of the selection committee or members of the syndicate."

By the way, the member from Timmins is having a \$600 dinner tonight for a small group of people, raising funds for the New Democratic Party. Here it is, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order. Start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing, please. I've cautioned members about using props. If I see it again, it will be taken. Thank you.

New question. The member from Cambridge.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. We'll try again. The member from Cambridge.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Labour. Summer in my community of Cambridge and North Dumfries means the end of the school year, and it also means that many young people are being hired to work in summer jobs, many working for the first time. In fact, my 19-year-old son, Liam, started his summer job yesterday, and I spoke to him last evening. He said that his first day included training on safety in his workplace, and he intends to do more safety training today.

Recently, the Ministry of Labour posted their internship blitz results on their website and have conducted vulnerable worker blitzes in the past. These blitzes show us that our government is taking action, but we know that more needs to be done.

Can the minister please let this House know what he is doing to make sure people who are working this spring and summer know their rights and feel safe when they go to work each day?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the member for that very important question.

All members of the House can play a role here. We should all be encouraging our young people to ask questions when they get their first job, to speak up when something they're asked to do perhaps feels unsafe, and we have to remind them that every Ontarian, regardless of their age, has the right to refuse unsafe work in this province.

Speaker, it's working. Between 2000 and 2012, lost-time work injuries for young people in this province decreased by 70%. That's the largest decline in this country and it makes Ontario one of the safest places to work in this entire country.

We continue to protect our young people through blitzes and through other initiatives, but we also reach out to people who are new to the province. We've got a program specifically designed for people who have joined us from Syria. Ensuring that workers, old and new, know their rights is so important in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I want to thank the minister for his work on this important file.

One way I know that spring is here is the increase in construction projects throughout Cambridge and the Waterloo region. New and experienced workers participate in these projects, such as the ongoing expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital and the 401, to help our cities grow and improve.

I know that the minister takes health and safety very seriously and, unfortunately, we still see incidents ending in tragedy across the province. Workers continue to get injured on the job or, worse, lose their lives. In my time as an emergency room nurse, I saw too many of these types of injuries.

I know that almost always these incidents could have been prevented. Health and safety training is paramount to making sure that all of our workers go home at the end of each day.

Can the minister please inform the House how our government is helping those who work on construction projects in the coming months?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks again to the member for that great question. She points out one of the worst parts of the job of being Minister of Labour: when you get that phone call or that email that somebody who left for work that morning isn't going to go home to their family that night. So we need to work really hard at that.

We've increased the amount of health and safety training that is now mandatory in the province of Ontario. Every single worker in this province has to take basic health and safety training before entering the workforce. We've got mandatory training for those who work at heights. As of April of this year, in one year, 100,000 people in this province have been trained to work at heights.

These steps make Ontario, as I said before, one of the safest places in this country to work. We've got construction health and safety blitzes that go directly to where they need to go—targeted inspections. Every incident is preventable. Let's keep working towards that zero.

SUMMER CAMPS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Education. As a result of changes made to the Child Care and Early Years Act, children entering the school system in September who are under the age of four will no longer be allowed to attend summer camps. This decision has taken Ontario families and summer camp operators by surprise.

The Ontario Camps Association wasn't even consulted about this change, and I quote: "The act was revised without the benefit of consultation or input of the OCA, its members or the thousands of families affected." No child should be left behind simply because of their age. Children who will turn four by December 31 are allowed to register for school, but they're not allowed to attend summer camps.

Minister, will you correct this error and make the entry to summer camps consistent with children entering the school system?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would like to clarify because I've found that there's a lot of confusion. This is a change that was made when the Child Care and Early Years Act was passed.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I said that.

Hon. Liz Sandals: No, but a lot of people think it's the regulations that were just published yesterday. In fact, it has got nothing to do with the regulations. It is in fact something that was passed over a year and a half ago. There has been quite a long lead time before this took effect because the actual law was passed about a year and a half ago.

If we put this in the context of what we were trying to do with the Child Care and Early Years Act, one of the things we found was that when we had situations where

children were unsafe, it was typically children under school age in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

1140

Ms. Sylvia Jones: There's not a single example of a child under four in the OCA camp system who has been impacted, so please don't use a safety argument for this.

Education professionals, including developmental psychologists, have told me there's absolutely no science to support the minister's decision to prevent kids from attending summer camp simply because they have yet to turn four. This is yet another example of your government ignoring experts before making decisions that impact our province's families—autism, child care regulations and now summer camps.

Will the minister allow children turning four by December 31 to attend summer camps this year?

Hon. Liz Sandals: As I said, this is a matter of law, not a matter of regulation. If we look at the situation, the kids are not being prevented from attending camps. What the law says is that if you are going to have a group of children under school age, you must have a child care licence—because the Ontario Camps Association is not a mandatory association; it's a voluntary association. Many, many camps in Ontario are not a member of any association. There is no regulatory authority that controls camps.

We want to ensure that our youngest children are safe, and in order to ensure that our youngest children are safe, if you are going to have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It's not helpful, when I'm trying to hear an answer, when people who asked the question are engaging across the floor.

New question.

INFRASTRUCTURE ONTARIO

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Tim Hortons Field in Hamilton was turned over to the city unfinished and nearly a year late last May. The construction of this stadium, under the watch of the government's Infrastructure Ontario, turned into, unfortunately, a fiasco. Completion and handover was rushed in order to ensure the stadium could be used for the Pan Am Games.

Another year has passed, and the stadium is still not complete. We're two years past due, and the city of Hamilton and the Hamilton Tiger-Cats have had enough. Both have filed notices of action in the Superior Court, claiming tens of millions of dollars in damages. Enough is enough.

Who did the Premier hold accountable for this two-year delay, and who will she hold accountable if this costs the province tens of millions of dollars?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. The member opposite knows all too well how important it

was for us to restructure that stadium, a stadium which he was very proudly at, at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, recognizing the outstanding support that we've done for the city of Hamilton as a result of that stadium, a stadium which will house the Hamilton Tiger-Cats—another great event that's coming forward, and I'm sure he'll be there for that ribbon-cutting ceremony as well.

We know that Infrastructure Ontario has done many projects across the province as a lead-up to the Pan and Parapan American Games, which is a great success for our province and a great economic development, which this one is, as well.

We know the legalities that are here. We also know that the job is getting done and it will be completed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Wow. Speaker, the city of Hamilton's claim specifies damages over construction delays, disputed contract items, non-compliance with the contract, warranty failings and other deficiencies. Several hundred seats have obstructed views. The Tiger-Cats claim that Infrastructure Ontario, which is tasked by the government to arrange all privatization contracts, made negligent misrepresentations in relation to the design, construction and completion of this stadium.

Speaker, here's the pièce de résistance: Three Pan Am executives placed third, fourth and fifth on last year's sunshine list, collecting over \$800,000 each in salaries and bonuses.

Why did the Premier authorize bonuses for three Pan Am executives, among the highest paid on the sunshine list, when claims of this magnitude were imminent against the Pan Am organizing committee?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the member's inference that the work being done—there are some shortfalls. Infrastructure Ontario is doing what is necessary with regard to perfecting the security, and that's exactly what is happening. They are getting resolutions moving forward. We are talking about some minor amendments that are required.

But more importantly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: What's important is that the stadium was ready for the games and it's going to be ready for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats—as a brand new home for the champion Ticats. That's proceeding without delay.

DOCK AND BOATHOUSE PERMITS

Mr. Chris Ballard: Mr. Speaker, through you, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. I know that the Public Lands Act is administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and governs activities on crown land and shore lands. Minister, there may be some confusion for waterside property owners because of an Ontario Superior Court of Justice decision that has changed the permitting require-

ments under the Public Lands Act for docks and boat-houses in Ontario. As a result, I understand some dock and boathouse construction and rebuilding will require a permit from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry in situations where a permit was not required before.

Residents of my riding of Newmarket–Aurora who own waterside properties want to know about the changes and why they were made before they head to their cottages this May long weekend. Would the minister please explain how permit requirements have changed and what people interested in replacing, expanding or building a new dock or boathouse should know?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for the question. I believe that, probably, there are many members in the Legislature who have heard about this issue in their constituency offices. If they haven't heard about it yet, I would expect they will be hearing about it soon. I've had an opportunity to talk to at least three members of the official opposition, Conservative members. We committed in those discussions and advised them that we were working on this and that there would be more information forthcoming in the near term.

Yesterday, my office sent out a letter to all MPPs. If you haven't received that already, you should be receiving that soon. As the summer season approaches, we believe that this issue is going to receive a higher profile in your constituency offices.

This is a result of an Ontario Superior Court of Justice decision relative to the Public Lands Act. In the supplemental, I'm going to provide a bit more information—which may not be contained in the letter that they will be receiving soon—to try to explain in a bit more detail about what we can expect.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

I understand that, historically, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry permits were only required for docks and boathouses that rested on or were attached to more than 15 square metres of shore lands, usually lakebeds. However, in its decision, the court held that a dock or boathouse floating above shore lands is considered to be occupying the lands beneath the structure, regardless of whether it's resting on or attached to the shore lands.

I also understand that because of this change from previous procedures, your ministry is working to simplify the process for individuals who want to build, replace or expand docks or boathouses that are larger than 15 square metres.

Would the minister explain how the ministry is working to address the issue and what individuals thinking of building, replacing or expanding a dock or boathouse should know?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

To restate, this action is the result of a ruling from the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. Some docks and boat-

houses will now require permits in situations where authorization was not required before. Going forward, new docks or boathouses, seasonal docks or boathouses, and expansions to existing docks or boathouses will require a permit if they are larger than 15 square metres. Smaller docks or boathouses that occupy 15 square metres or less of shore lands do not require Public Lands Act authorizations at this time. We'll continue to communicate this information as best as we're able.

1150

I want to state very clearly that there will be no fees associated with obtaining these dock and boathouse permits. It's important that people are aware of that. I've also directed officials to explore options to address this situation. Hopefully by the fall, we will be in a position to make announcements to all of the members who have been affected by this so that in the years going forward, we won't have to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Education. Last week, during Children's Mental Health Week, the Upper Canada District School Board director of education, Stephen Sliwa, announced his arbitrary decision to terminate the board's long-term partnership with the Cordick treatment program. For 20 years, this program successfully treated and provided therapy so hundreds of children with behavioural problems could graduate back into their schools.

Is the minister aware that the Upper Canada District School Board is placing children with behavioural and mental health issues at a significant disadvantage and making it impossible to deliver quality services obligated under the Education Act?

Hon. Liz Sandals: My understanding is that the facility in question is a privately operated group home. There is something, as you would know, Speaker, under the Education Act, which we refer to as section 23 schools. There are teachers that are provided to go into care and treatment facilities. Those could be correctional facilities, hospitals, mental health facilities—as I take it is—but some sort of a facility where the children aren't able to leave each day.

It isn't the board that provides the care or the treatment—in this case, you said of mental health. It isn't the board that provides mental health. The board simply provides the teaching for—sends a few EAs for special education.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Back to the Minister of Education: It's unfortunate that she's not more knowledgeable and briefed on section 23 programs. But unlike the callous actions of the director of the school board, I do recognize the professional staff that I've dealt with at the Ministries of Community and Social Services and of Children and Youth.

However, we know that the Cordick treatment program was contracted for 36 children. I understand that the new service will be reduced to just 24. Also, these treatments will no longer be provided to children in grades 7 and 8. Furthermore, unlike the Cordick treatment program, the new service will not provide professional clinicians and psychiatrists to diagnose and treat the children.

Will the minister confirm that these reductions are indeed factual, and if so, why the minister is allowing the school board to shirk their responsibilities and eliminate these much-needed services?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I was glad to have a conversation with the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington last week about the Cordick education centre. As he knows, it's a privately operated residence but it is licensed by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. A number of meetings have actually taken place earlier this year with the school board, with my regional staff, the local children's aid society and the local mental health agency to discuss how to maintain the program at least till the end of the school year and allow for the proper transition of youth.

It was Children's Mental Health Week last week. We didn't have a huge opportunity to talk about that in the House, so I'll say now, as the minister responsible for children's mental health: We want to make sure that children who need mental health services get that at the right time, at the right place and in a way that suits their needs. That's why we've made substantial investments in children's mental health. I'll be happy to talk to the member—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, my office has been overwhelmed this spring by constituents calling, worried about potential cuts to Matthews Memorial Hospital and their emergency department located on St. Joseph Island. The possibility of reducing the current 24-hour emergency care to just 12 hours is deeply troubling to community members. I've heard from St. Joseph Island, Desbarats, Bruce Mines and along the North Shore and other surrounding areas about how devastating this would be to our communities.

Minister, patients and families deserve to know what's happening to our local hospital. Will the minister tell us exactly what cuts are on the table for Matthews Memorial Hospital?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate this question. Our hospitals, on a regular basis, as they look to maintain and often improve services and to

provide a sustainable health care environment, look to different options and recommendations in terms of how they can modify services. But they are required to do it in a context where there is an expectation that the level of care is maintained or improved, that those important services to communities, particularly those that are served by Matthews, are maintained.

They do this work in concert with the LHIN, and the ministry as well. Any decisions, any ideas that the administration or the board of that hospital might have, have to be then shared with the LHIN. The LHIN shares them with the ministry so that all three parties, together with the community, are involved in the decisions. No decisions that I am aware of have been made with regard to this particular hospital.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Funding for hospitals in northern Ontario is simply inadequate, Minister. To make matters worse, small hospitals such as Blind River, Thessalon and Matthews Memorial, which joined together with the goal of providing real rural patient care, do not have the funding to offer outpatient lab work. We have seen time and time again that northern patients are taking a back seat when it comes to proper health care.

Minister, why is the government refusing to deliver stable, predictable funding that hospitals need to protect patient care for the people of northern Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, it's just not true that we're not supporting and investing in our hospitals in the northern part of this province. In fact, because many of them—not all of them, but many of them—are small and rural, we have a dedicated fund of \$20 million annually that goes to those hospitals.

Actually, the small, rural hospitals are not part of the funding reform that we made several years ago, so they continue to be treated in a separate fashion, understanding the unique challenges that they might face. Across the north, whether it's Thunder Bay hospital or Health Sciences North or that cluster of small, rural hospitals, we make sure that we're investing in them.

Importantly, I'd like to speak to the member opposite. He hasn't, to my knowledge, brought this to my attention or that of my staff or the ministry about Matthews hospital. Again, I would simply implore all members of this Legislature, if they have a specific concern about a health care service in their riding, to come to me. I'm happy to work with them.

CELEBRATE ONTARIO

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Minister, a few weeks ago, I was proud to join you and Minister Leal at the Art Gallery of Peterborough to announce the recipients of this year's Celebrate Ontario grants.

Celebrate supports local organizations by allowing festivals and events to build capacity, and I was pleased to hear that Peterborough Musicfest received funding.

This year marks the 30th year that Peterborough Musicfest has run on the picturesque shores of Little Lake. To this day it remains a barrier-free festival with no social barriers and free attendance. Last year's Celebrate Ontario supported an increased performance schedule which resulted in a 28% increase in tourism.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like the minister to tell the members of this House more about events supported as a result of Celebrate Ontario.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for the question. It's true: I was in Peterborough with the Minister of Agriculture at the art gallery. What a beautiful part of Ontario.

Our government's Celebrate Ontario fund supported 200 festivals and events across Ontario, increasing attendance and maximizing their economic impact. A great example of the effect of Celebrate Ontario is our support for the Victoria Playhouse. Last year, the funding helped the Victoria Playhouse surpass its attendance goals and attract more than \$4.3 million in visitor spending for the southwest Ontario region.

Mr. Speaker, that's a story that has been repeated right across this province, from the Stratford Summer Music festival to Timmins's Great Canadian Kayak Challenge and Festival to the Ottawa Bluesfest and Niagara's Winter Festival of Lights. All across this great province, our government is supporting local organizations and building capacities for our festivals and events.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. It is fantastic to hear how wide-reaching and how successful our government's Celebrate Ontario fund is.

My riding is home to other successful festivals and events like the Westben Arts Festival Theatre and Cultivate: a Festival of Food and Drink, along with Float Your Fanny Down the Ganny.

In all, 200 festivals and events received funding: events in northern Ontario, in rural communities in the southwest, and events all along the waterfront; in Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Leeds-Grenville and Timiskaming-Cochrane. The members of this House know that Celebrate Ontario is wide-reaching and improves tourism.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you tell the members of this House about how Celebrate Ontario supports tourism and provides platforms for Ontario travellers?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

Each year, we know that our festivals and events here in Ontario, through the Celebrate Ontario fund, help to create jobs. In fact, since 2009, we've been able to create tens of thousands of jobs through this fund. Our targeted support has led to an estimated 6.2 million in additional tourists coming back here to the province in Ontario.

The tourism sector here in the province of Ontario is a \$28-billion sector that employs over 350,000 people, many of them young people.

We're so proud of tourism. We're so proud of our festivals and events. We'll continue to make that invest-

ment through our Celebrate Ontario fund, so we can continue to ensure that we can tell our story, share our heritage and, of course, add to the economic impact here in the province of Ontario.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Premier. In a recent speech to the Timmins Chamber of Commerce, the CEO of Gowest Gold, a junior mining company, called out your government for uncertainty in the current permitting process. Gowest has been waiting since 2009 for all of their permits to be reviewed and either approved or denied by this government. I believe the Premier would agree that seven years is a very long time to wait for a project that will create jobs and contribute to Ontario's economy.

Will the Premier explain why the permitting and approval process in Ontario is being allowed to stifle investment and prevent new mines from opening?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. David Oraziotti: We certainly appreciate the question from the member opposite. As the member knows full well, Ontario is a leading jurisdiction in mining and mining development. There are millions of dollars that are generated from the industry and jobs created as a result of the investments made in the sector.

Our ministry and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines are working very hard with First Nations and mining companies to ensure that the permitting process is streamlined and is one that incents development and supports economic growth in Ontario when it comes to mining.

We're pleased with the progress that we've made. We know that there's more work to do, and I know the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is committed to doing that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I believe that I'm introducing some guests. I just can't find them at the moment. I'd like to welcome—

Hon. James J. Bradley: They're there.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Are they there? They're there—the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, the MEAO, represented by Denise Magi, the vice-president and secretary; Keith Deviney, the president; and other colleagues and officials: Ted Ball and John Doherty.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, would like to welcome members from the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, as well as the Association of Ontario Health Centres, who are here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: I just realized that my former colleague, a trustee with the old Toronto Board of Education, arrived in the east visitors' gallery: John Doherty. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INVICTUS GAMES

Mr. Michael Harris: It was just a week ago that we were honoured to host Prince Harry in this House and welcomed his proclamation that the home for the 2017 Invictus Games will be right here in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. As we cheer on our servicemen and women as they compete in Orlando, Florida, this week in this year's edition of the games, we look forward to bringing them back home, where they will compete in 12 sports along with 600 others from 16 different countries next year.

As Bronwen Evans of the True Patriot Love Foundation noted, the games "will enable all Canadians to honour the men and women who have come face-to-face with the reality of sacrificing for their country."

When Prince Harry launched his first Invictus Games in London in 2014, he began a movement that has grown into the only international adaptive sporting event for wounded, injured and ill active duty and veteran service members. Now that it has moved across the pond to Florida and, next year, here in Toronto, it continues to grow, drawing spectators and fans across our nations, as we cheer on our heroes who have sacrificed so much.

By using the power of sport to inspire, Invictus opens doors to awareness of the physical and psychological hurdles faced by those who serve our country.

The word "invictus" is Latin for "unconquerable" or "undefeated." Today, I join with those here in Ontario, those in the stands in Florida and those watching on across the world in cheering on these undefeated military athletes as they conquer their own hurdles on the road to the Toronto Invictus Games in 2017.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, members of the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario are at Queen's Park. Why? Well, it's because on May 12, it is official awareness day for myalgic encephalomyelitis—sometimes called chronic fatigue syndrome—fibromyalgia and environmental sensitivities, also known as multiple chemical sensitivity.

In late 2013, MEAO—it's shorter—together with the Association of Ontario Health Centres, submitted a proposal for an Ontario Centre of Excellence in Environmental Health. From the proposal, we learned that over 580,000 people in Ontario have been diagnosed with chronic, complex, environmentally linked illnesses. That's 5% of the population of Ontario.

We also learned that people suffering from these conditions experience systemic barriers to getting the health

care that they need because diagnosis and treatment of these serious conditions are not currently available in Ontario.

I believe this has to change, Speaker. A year and a half ago, the Minister of Health agreed and announced the creation of a task force. But it's been a year and a half and nothing has changed. These people are counting on the minister to keep his promise and finally take action to provide effective health services to them.

The time has come to support the Ontario Centre of Excellence in Environmental Health. Today would be a good day to start.

SADIQ KHAN

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I rise on behalf of all members of the Legislature to recognize the election of Mayor Sadiq Khan, who has just been elected as the mayor of the city of London, England. This is an extraordinary event and, of course, a sign of the embrace of diversity and pluralism.

We would like to commend Mayor Khan not only on an extraordinary campaign as he reached out to Londoners and beyond, but also for, I think, embodying the wishes of his family. As you know, Speaker, he is of Pakistani Muslim descent. He comes from a very modest household. He grew up in what I understand is social housing, and he served as a councillor, as a member of Parliament federally there, and now as the mayor of the city of London.

I've composed a letter to him which I'll be sending on behalf of all members of the Legislature. I'll actually sign that letter here in Parliament.

Of course, this election was not without its controversy. The usual suspects did speak in the usual way, but Londoners withstood that.

I would like to commend him as, obviously, someone who supports diversity, pluralism, multiculturalism and the embrace of all humanity. We congratulate you, Mayor Khan. I officially invite you to the Legislature of Ontario and look forward to hosting you here.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I, too, am pleased to rise and recognize the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario. They're here today because, as mentioned earlier, May 12 is the official awareness day for myalgic encephalomyelitis, fibromyalgia and environmental sensitivities. These are three chronic, complex, environmentally linked illnesses that are afflicting over 580,000 Ontarians.

Unfortunately, back in October 2013, a business case proposal was given for the Ontario Centre of Excellence in Environmental Health and was presented to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in order to provide the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians afflicted with these illnesses with the appropriate care and treatment they deserve. To date, approval has not been given to the

business case proposal. Although the ministry has recognized the business case proposal and has announced that a task force would be created, the ministry has failed to do so over the last one and a half years. The task force has not been implemented and work cannot begin.

The Progressive Conservative Party urges the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to get moving on the task force that will deliver a system of care to ensure that effective and appropriate health and social services are given to the hundreds of thousands of Ontario patients who suffer from these chronic, complex, environmentally linked illnesses.

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yesterday, I had the occasion, along with my federal counterpart, Charlie Angus, to visit Attawapiskat as a follow-up to the ongoing crisis in that community. Let me just first of all say that, unfortunately, this crisis is happening in other communities as well and may not be reported as much.

But what is really clear coming out of the discussions that we had yesterday with the chief and the various members of the community and those people that work at WAHA, which is our hospital, and others is that there is a real, chronic underfunding of staffing that's needed to be able to deliver services in those communities. In all of our communities where we come from, there's a functioning children's aid; a functioning children's treatment centre, normally; a functioning hospital; and a mental health association who all provide services in our communities to deal with people who are in crisis.

If you live in Attawapiskat, there is not one single mental health worker to deal with kids under 18 out of Payukotayno—no money to do that. When it comes to WAHA, we have one worker who is a mental health worker to service the entire community.

Now I want to thank—we have EMAT there, and the government has seen fit to extend that for 30 days in order to provide respite to the WAHA staff so that we can provide some services during this immediate crisis. But what is becoming more and more clear is that we need to make sure that we provide the resources, the training and support necessary to build up the services in that community so community members themselves can staff those positions and be part of their community and be part of functional agencies that are able to deal with those issues in the community on an ongoing basis.

1510

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased once again to co-sponsor the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, a registered Ontario charity, which is here today, May 10, because Thursday, May 12, of course, is the official awareness day for myalgic encephalomyelitis, sometimes known as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and environmental sensitivities, also known as

multiple chemical sensitivity, which are three chronic, complex, environmentally linked illnesses that affect almost 600,000 people in Ontario.

MEAO supports the hundreds of thousands of patients in Ontario who have complex, chronic, environmentally linked illnesses. As pointed out numerous times over the years, these patients experience systemic barriers to getting the health care they need because diagnosis and treatment of these very serious conditions are seriously lacking in some sections of Ontario. Indeed, in most areas of Ontario, health care for these illnesses is non-existent.

I would like to just also mention, if I could, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of us will urge the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to implement that task force that was mentioned earlier and that has patients at the centre of the process and leads to a health system that meets the needs of these patients so that hundreds of thousands of Ontarians suffering from chronic, complex, environmentally linked illnesses can at long last receive the diagnosis and treatment they really need.

Don't forget: We'll see everyone today over in rooms 228 and 230 at 4:30 p.m. You're also invited to continue wearing the MEAO's ribbons, which we put on this morning.

RIDING OF OXFORD

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the survey in my recent newsletter. I genuinely enjoyed reading each response and sharing the concerns of my constituents with the Legislature.

The biggest concerns for my constituents are the economy and jobs, government spending, seniors' issues and taxes.

People continue to tell me that the cost of living is rising in Wynne's Ontario. Some 94% of the people who responded said that their family has been impacted by the increasing cost of hydro, and 67% of the respondents said that impact has been significant. In fact, one constituent enclosed their hydro bill: \$700 for a single month.

They told me they can't afford the mandatory pension plan; 78% of the people oppose it. And while costs are going up, services aren't improving. Some 87% said that health care hasn't improved over the last 10 years.

They told me about loved ones who are waiting for cataract surgeries, knee surgeries, hip replacements and occupational therapy. Many of them said they are still having trouble finding a family doctor. People see huge government spending, but not enough of that money is going to the services that they need.

Again, I want to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the survey and share their concerns. I will continue to share their stories to show the real impact of this government's policies and I will continue to push for the things that matter to the people of Oxford: keeping the cost of living affordable, creating jobs, and health care that we can depend on.

ST. MARIA GORETTI CHURCH

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm pleased to stand and share a few words about the 60th jubilee of St. Maria Goretti Church that took place in my riding of Scarborough Southwest this past April 16.

The mass was presided over by Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto and a notable figure in the Catholic Church.

The church, which takes its name from one of the youngest canonized saints, has long been a spiritual and inspirational pillar in the Scarborough community.

I was fortunate enough to attend the service and I could tell from the reaction on parishioners' faces just how much it meant to have Cardinal Collins and other members of the Catholic clergy present and involved in this very special mass.

I have personally attended mass at this church for more than a decade and have witnessed the incredible growth of the church community and the way it has brought the people of Scarborough Southwest together for their spiritual fulfillment.

Celebrating the 60th jubilee is an exceptional accomplishment. I'd like to extend my warmest wishes to the clergy—Father Edwin Galea, Father Elias Chachati and Reverend Ramon Villardo—as well as all church members, and to thank the church for its 60 years of contributions to Scarborough Southwest and the surrounding area.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize May as South Asian Heritage Month. Across our diverse province, Ontarians everywhere are celebrating South Asian culture and history, and there's certainly a lot to celebrate.

Ontario is home to more than one million South Asians. In fact, our province boasts the largest South Asian population in all of Canada. This dynamic community has contributed immeasurably to the fabric of Ontario in business, science, arts, medicine and more, and we are all stronger for it.

South Asian Heritage Month is a time to celebrate our diversity and our community's rich traditions. There are festivals, exhibits and ceremonies happening throughout the month of May. In fact, just this weekend, I attended a South Asian festival in Halton. There were games and contests for the kids, entertainment for the adults and, of course, amazing food for everyone. It was a fantastic and colourful celebration of South Asian culture and traditions.

South Asians come from many countries and speak many languages. These events are a shining example of Ontario's multicultural society. I want to encourage everyone here and across the province to go out and celebrate this community's cultures and backgrounds, and enjoy the many events happening this month. I want

to wish all South Asians a happy and meaningful South Asian Heritage Month.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 10, 2016, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Singh from the Standing Committee on Social Policy presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / *Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur la récupération des ressources et l'économie circulaire et la Loi transitoire de 2016 sur le réacheminement des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB
OF NIAGARA ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2016

Mr. Gates moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr45, An Act respecting the Boys and Girls Club of Niagara.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I thank you very much for allowing me time to present this petition. I will sign it, as I agree with it, and I'll give it to Emma.

1520

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have about 300 names collected from all across Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the day of mourning is a day to remember and honour those who have been killed, injured or who suffered illness as a result of work-related incidents and to honour their families. It also serves as a day to protect the living by strengthening our commitment to health and safety in all workplaces in Ontario for the common goal of preventing further deaths and injuries from occurring in the workplace;

"Whereas a workers day of mourning is recognized in more than 100 countries around the world;

"Whereas 1,000 Canadian workers are killed on the job each year and hundreds of thousands more are injured or permanently disabled;

"Whereas it is expected that more than 90% of workplace deaths are preventable and raised awareness of this fact is necessary. Every worker is entitled to a safe work environment, free of preventable accidents, and that we, as a province, are committed to reaching such a goal;

"Whereas our MUSH sector (municipal, universities, schools and hospitals) as leaders in their communities are not doing enough to recognize and raise awareness of the seriousness of workplace injury and death;

"Whereas the flag symbolizes us as a province, and the lowered flag is a powerful symbol of our shared loss and respect, brings focus to the issues and symbolizes we are united on this front as a province at all levels, not divided;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the workers of Ontario with swift passage of Bill 180, Workers Day of Mourning Act, 2016, that would require all publicly funded provincial and municipal buildings to lower their Canadian and Ontario flags on April 28 each year."

I agree and will give it to Grace. I'll sign my name and send it to the desk.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's worth noting that I've had these petitions come in from all over Ontario. This one comes from folks from Drummond and Cambridge.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children and youth living with asthma;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on ... private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41" through to "third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote ... and to seek royal assent ... upon its passage."

Speaker, I agree with the petition, sign my name and give it to Aadil to bring down.

APRAXIA

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all children in the province of Ontario deserve every opportunity to reach their full potential; and

"Whereas speech and language pathologists in Ontario are afforded the capabilities to provide a diagnosis of childhood apraxia of speech and receive specialized mandated training; and

"Whereas intensive and frequent individualized professional speech therapy, multiple times weekly, is needed to facilitate verbal speech; and

"Whereas school-aged children with severe and significant speech and language disorders like childhood apraxia of speech are not receiving the quality or quantity of speech therapy outlined as essential by current evidence and research, by either CCACs or school boards;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government of Ontario to declare that May 14 is Apraxia Awareness Day."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with Preston.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Mrs. Valerie Hawkins from Long Lake Road in Sudbury in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the residents of northern Ontario, particularly people who are sick or elderly, depend on public transportation for appointments in southern Ontario;

"Whereas intercity bus routes have been eliminated by Greyhound, for example, all daytime routes between Sudbury and Ottawa" have been eliminated; and

"Whereas there have been serious reductions at Ontario Northland, including the elimination of Northland's train services;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: Ensure that Ontario Northland offers adequate and equitable intercity transportation service from northern to southern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Aadil to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices

across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to William to bring to the desk.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I totally agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Alfred.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government has cancelled the Northlander passenger train which served the residents of northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas the provincial government has closed bus stations and is cancelling bus routes despite promising enhanced bus services to replace the train; and

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) has been given a mandate that its motor coach division must be self-sustaining; and

"Whereas Metrolinx, the crown corporation that provides train and bus service in the GTA ... is subsidized by more than \$100 million annually; and

"Whereas the subsidy to Metrolinx has increased annually for the last seven years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to reverse the decision to cancel bus routes immediately and to treat northerners equitably in decisions regarding public transportation."

I wholeheartedly agree and send it down with page Faiz.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have another petition here from Joan and Bruce Berry from Paris. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children and youth living with asthma;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

1530

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on ... private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee," to speed its passage through to third and final reading.

I agree with the petition, sign my name and give it to Brendan to bring to the table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space as it was built for a mere 7,000" emergency room visits per year and "experiences in excess of 33,000 visits annually; and

"Whereas the government-implemented Places to Grow Act forecasts massive population growth in New Tecumseth, which along with the aging population will only intensify the need for the redevelopment of the hospital; and

"Whereas all other hospital emergency facilities are more than 45 minutes away with no public transit available between those communities; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government immediately provide the necessary funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital for the redevelopment of their emergency department, operating rooms, diagnostic imaging and laboratory to ensure that they can continue to provide stable and ongoing service to residents in our area."

I agree with the petition and I certainly will sign it.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

"Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

"Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a decent work agenda by making sure that Ontario's labour and employment laws:

"—require all workers be paid a uniform, provincial minimum wage regardless of a worker's age, job or sector of employment;

"—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

"—ensure part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time, permanent counterparts;

"—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

"—support job security for workers when companies or contracts change ownership;

"—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temp agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

"—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

"—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

"—offer proactive enforcement of laws, supported by adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the law;

"—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

"—require a \$15 minimum wage for all workers."

I support this petition, and I send it to the Clerk with page Samantha.

CAREGIVERS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled "Family Caregivers Petition."

"Whereas there are over 2.6 million caregivers to a family member, a friend or a neighbour in Ontario;

"Whereas these caregivers work hard to provide care to those that are most in need even though their efforts are often overlooked;

"Whereas one third of informal caregivers are distressed, which is twice as many as four years ago;

"Whereas without these caregivers, the health care system and patients would greatly suffer in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP Gélinas's bill to proclaim the first Tuesday of every April as Family Caregiver Day to increase recognition and awareness of family caregivers in Ontario."

I agree with it, affix my name and send it down to the table with Benjamin.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with William.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order. I recognize the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I rise to correct my record. Earlier this morning I misspoke and I said that when the Premier was the Minister of Education, she had promised IBI in schools. What I had meant to say is she had promised ABA in schools. I need to correct my record because either way, students are not getting the services and support they need from the school system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. There is a point of opportunity for the member to correct her record.

The time for petitions has expired.

OPPOSITION DAY

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

MARCHÉS PUBLICS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move the following:

Whereas Ontarians are concerned that energy policy in Ontario is set according to what benefits the Liberal Party of Ontario rather than achieving affordable, green and reliable energy for families or businesses; and

Whereas there are deeply concerning questions about the conduct of the Liberal government in respect of energy contracts; and

Whereas the government cancelled wind power contracts in Liberal-held ridings and is now being investigated by the OPP for allegedly destroying records around these decisions; and

Whereas the government decided to sell Hydro One in spite of evidence from the Financial Accountability Officer that this sale will not build infrastructure and will increase the deficit; and

Whereas questions remain around the government's use of the Hydro One IPO for fundraising purposes with the revelation of ministerial quotas for party fundraising; and

Whereas the government's decision to cancel the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants in Liberal-held seats at a cost of \$1.1 billion along with the government's decision to delete records regarding the gas plant scandal; and

Whereas the Liberal government faces five OPP anti-rackets squad investigations; and

Whereas the Liberal government of Quebec established a Commission of Inquiry on the Awarding and Management of Public Contracts in the Construction Industry—the Charbonneau Commission—to examine the inappropriate awarding of government construction contracts;

Therefore, in the opinion of this House, Ontario should establish a public inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 4. Back to the leader of the third party opposition, Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I wish I could say it is my pleasure to rise and speak to the motion that we filed the other day, but it is no pleasure to have to have this kind of discussion in the chamber because of the behaviour of the governing party here in Ontario. The member for Don Valley West—you may recall, Speaker—got her job as Premier because energy mismanagement pushed Dalton McGuinty out the door, as well as a number of other cabinet ministers. Three years later, sadly, nothing has changed.

Three years ago, the government was reeling from a scandal. Energy contracts had been ripped up at a huge public expense, and government records had been wiped

clean, all so that the Liberals could cling to power. Three years later, not a lot has changed. Now, like then, the government broke contracts it signed to save its political bacon. Now, like then, they're alleged to have covered up the evidence, and sadly, now, like then, the OPP are investigating.

But it's not just one OPP investigation; it's five OPP investigations currently underway into the actions of this Liberal government. It's not just these two energy scandals; it's Hydro One. It's paying the USA, US states, paying them to take our excess power off our hands, and it's using the energy file to fill the Liberal Party war chest. Every time the Liberal Party looks at the energy file, they should be asking, "How can we ensure that Ontarians have affordable, clean, reliable electricity?" Instead, they're asking, "What can the energy system do for the Ontario Liberal Party?"

People were so hopeful that this Premier would change things. She said she understood the mistakes that had been made. But instead of changing things, Speaker, it's clear that the Liberals simply have the wrong priorities. Ontarians are using less when it comes to electricity. When it comes to energy, they are using less and paying more.

1540

Liberal MPPs are going to stand up this afternoon—maybe the energy minister will stand up, and maybe even the Premier will stand up—and they'll say that everything is fine. If that's the case, if everything is so fine, then there's no reason to say no to a public inquiry on the awarding and management of contracts in Ontario's electricity sector; it's pretty simple.

Of course, we all know that everything isn't fine, and that's why people are worried. That's why we are all worried, Speaker. It's why we need an inquiry in the first place. Let's go through some of the reasons why it isn't fine.

Things aren't fine because five years after the Liberals cancelled the gas plants, five years after this Premier signed the cabinet minute making the decision official that turned this from a scandal into a \$1.1-billion scandal, the scandal hasn't gone away. Ontarians are still paying that billion-dollar bill. The police are still investigating senior Liberals. The Liberals are being investigated for the gas plants scandal, the Ornge air ambulance scandal, for violations of the Election Act, for criminal bribery and now for deleting emails that were essential to an energy lawsuit.

People deserve to know that their government is not corrupt, Speaker. But when they're facing five police investigations, people start to worry. Things aren't fine when we're actually paying New York, Michigan, Minnesota, Manitoba and Quebec to take power off our hands that Ontario ratepayers have paid for. When the Hydro-Electric Power Commission was established in 1906, Sir Adam Beck's call to action was that Ontarians should have "Power at Cost." Affordable electricity is what built our forestry industry, our mineral refineries and our manufacturing industry, and was essential to making Ontario an economic powerhouse in our nation.

Now, instead of power at cost, we're getting power that costs. Today, according to Manitoba Hydro, a consumer in Ontario, whether they are a household or a business, will pay a bill that's nearly two times as high as Manitoba or Quebec. The result is that mills that have left northern Ontario and smelters that have been relocated are looking to those other two provinces to set up shop. Instead of looking for the best deal for Ontario businesses and families, we regularly pay other provinces and states to take power off our hands. We pay for it, and then we pay our competitors to use it. I'd like to see the Premier explain that to a family who can barely afford to pay their hydro bill.

Things aren't fine, Speaker, when the Liberal Party is facing a lawsuit for cancelling contracts for political reasons and hiding the information. After five years of cancelling and uncancelling offshore wind projects, the government, on the eve of an election, announced on a Friday that it would impose a ban on offshore wind projects. That sparked a lawsuit—not unexpectedly—by Trillium Power Wind Corp. One legal analysis phrases Trillium's complaint this way: The government was "acting out of political motivation to win seats in an upcoming election with the knowledge that their actions would harm Trillium...."

The further this case went, the stranger things became, because Trillium says now that key documents that they're looking for to build their lawsuit are unexplainably missing—key documents, can you believe that? Key Liberal government documents are somehow missing. Well, my goodness. They say these documents could actually prove their case, and they also say that these documents specifically have been destroyed, that they have been told those documents have been destroyed. That was enough for the OPP to start this fifth investigation into the Liberal government—the fifth investigation. Of course, the Premier has denied knowing anything about this latest police investigation, but to quote the Ottawa Citizen, "Premier Kathleen Wynne should have known about the new police investigation into the government's energy-contract dealings, the lawyer for the wind-power company that touched the investigation off alleges, because he told the government about it." So the Premier doesn't know anything about it, even though the lawyer told the government about it.

Around the same time that Trillium launched its lawsuit, Windstream Energy and Mesa Power launched suits with NAFTA. In April 2014, Mesa said that records relating to their claim had been deleted by the government. They said in their statements to NAFTA that this was "a provincial government which has been repeatedly found to have engaged in political manipulation and interference in regulatory processes when it suited its own partisan interest."

Now, that's not the NDP saying that and that's not the PCs saying that, Speaker. These are lawyers for companies that have had to deal with the wrongdoings of this government through legislative or quasi-judicial processes. That's who is making these accusations against

the Liberal government here in Ontario. It is disgraceful, it is embarrassing and it is shameful what this government has been up to over the last number of years.

In August 2014, Windstream submitted to NAFTA “that relevant documents from the Premier’s office and the minister’s chief of staff have been deleted....” Senior Liberals wiped out records in the gas plant scandal. It is alleged that they wiped out records in the Trillium case, the Mesa Power case and in the Windstream Energy case.

Once is just a bad decision, Speaker. Doing something like that once is just a bad decision. But four separate allegations that records are being destroyed? That’s a pattern. It’s an ugly pattern, but that’s the pattern of our Liberal government here in Ontario.

Things are not fine with Hydro One. The Premier didn’t run on a plan to sell off Hydro One, and for months she stood in this House and denied that she was going to sell off our revenue-generating assets. The finance minister said, “We have made it clear that we are not going to sell off our assets.” The Premier mocked Ontarians when she said, “We’re not selling off the assets.” She stood there in her place and spoke those words. They’re on the Hansard. They’re on the public record.

Then, lo and behold, she’s selling Hydro One, doing exactly the opposite of what she promised here in the House and doing something she was not upfront with the people of this province about during the election campaign that she had run just a year earlier.

She waited until she had the majority under her belt, and then she made a decision that over 80% of Ontarians say is the wrong decision and that hundreds of municipalities say is wrong for their communities.

According to the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, AMPCO, “The labouring industrial electricity customer is not the winner in a plan by the Ontario government to sell off a large stake in Hydro One....”

So it’s not just New Democrats, it’s not just 80% of Ontarians and it’s not just the Progressive Conservative Party that kind of doesn’t think the way they’re doing it is the right way to do it.

Major power consumers, just so people know, are those big, big companies that employ lots of workers and draw a lot of power off the grid to sustain their manufacturing and processing concerns, their businesses, their companies and their manufacturing. These are the people who are saying that the sell-off of Hydro One was the wrong thing to do.

Newspaper editorial boards from across Ontario and across the left and right spectrum agree that the selling of Hydro One is a bad decision.

The cooler heads, like the CEO of Hydro-Québec, say that the plan just doesn’t make sense. He said, “There’s a better chance that the Egyptians would privatize the pyramids than we would privatize the dams of James Bay.” Now, that’s somebody who knows what he’s talking about, unlike the Premier of this province.

The Premier claims that this is about infrastructure? Give me a break. It’s not about infrastructure, because it

doesn’t raise any money. It doesn’t raise money, Speaker. It actually costs money.

Again, it’s not only me saying that. Ontario’s non-partisan Financial Accountability Officer conducted an assessment of what the Hydro One sell-off would mean for the province. He wrote, “In years following the sale of 60% of Hydro One, the province’s budget balance would be worse than it would have been without the sale.” That means it costs Ontario money. Ontario will be worse off. And while the Liberals issue press release after press release saying it pays off debt, the FAO is crystal clear: He says, “The province’s net debt would initially be reduced, but will eventually be higher than it would have been without the sale.”

1550

Shame on them, Speaker. Shame on them. Our debt isn’t going down as much as they claim; it’s going up. But they’re going to let some other government in the future have to deal with that. It’s so irresponsible. It’s so wilfully ignorant of the will of the people. It’s going up. It’s not going down.

The sale is bad for Ontario businesses, who already say that the high cost of electricity is one of their biggest concerns. It’s bad for our environment because the public is losing control of an asset which we could be leveraging to reduce consumption and ensure that we have green energy. And it’s bad for families, Speaker, who watch their hydro bills go up faster than their paycheques. They do all the right things—they use less power, they do their laundry in the dead of the night, they turn down the thermostat—and they still pay more.

But while it’s bad for business, it’s bad for the environment, it’s bad for families, it’s great for the Liberal Party, Speaker. It’s great for the Liberal Party. The decision to sell off Hydro One created a boon for bankers. As one of the largest IPOs in recent memory, it meant a big payday for the firms underwriting the sale. So after the firms were selected, the Liberals called them up and said, “We’ve helped you. Now you can help us,” leading to a huge payday for the Premier’s political party, a lucrative fundraiser with those very bankers and firms.

In fact, just today, the Globe and Mail reported that the Premier hosted 90 private—

Mr. Arthur Potts: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Point of order: I recognize the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I think, quite clearly, in those previous remarks the member is violating section 23(i), which says, “Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member.” Totally unavowed—she should withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much for raising a point of order. However, I’ve been listening very carefully, and I believe that she is using parliamentary language and not invoking any motive.

I return it back to the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker.

In fact, just today, the *Globe* reported that the Premier hosted 90 private “cash-for-access fundraisers” in a two-year period. That’s one a week. She probably had more meetings with donors than she had with her own caucus, Speaker. It has been reported that some events used the Hydro One IPO in their solicitations of donors.

Speaker, we’ve got a problem here in Ontario. People are working harder. Everyday folks are working harder and harder. They’re often, these days, juggling multiple jobs. They’re commuting longer, and that means spending less time with their families or enjoying life. And it’s because the costs of the basics, like their hydro bill, are out of control. People feel like they’re left to fend for themselves against a system that’s only getting tougher. Instead of helping them, instead of getting hydro bills under control, the Premier keeps putting the interests of her political party first.

The government is still trying to cover up its energy scandals by wiping out documents. It’s still paying our competitors to take energy while people and businesses pay more. It’s still selling Hydro One—which is bad for just about everyone—just because it helps the Liberal Party fill the war chest.

People deserve to have faith that their government is making decisions that are in the best interests of the province, not just the best interests of their political party. But Ontarians look at the energy industry and what they see is decision after decision after decision after decision that’s bad for Ontario, bad for the people of this province, but good for the Liberal Party. It is a shameful disgrace. It should not happen in this province, it should not happen in this country, and that’s why there needs to be a commission of inquiry into the way that the Liberals are behaving.

In Quebec, a Liberal government faced serious questions like the ones we’re asking today about the awarding of construction contracts. They saw that government decisions were being made to benefit the party. So after a growing scandal, that Liberal Premier established a public inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the construction industry, or, as others would call it, as it has come to be known, the Charbonneau commission. That Charbonneau commission made 60 recommendations to do things like protect whistle-blowers, reform political donations and increase the penalties for corruption.

Most importantly, it cleared the air. It showed people that the deck had in fact been stacked and provided a path forward to right the wrongs that had been perpetrated against the people of Quebec. The people of Ontario deserve for the wrongs to be righted here in this province as well. It’s time for a Charbonneau-type commission here in Ontario. It’s why the New Democrats believe that Ontario should establish a public inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy industry.

The Premier got her job because of energy scandals here in this province. She said that she would clean things up, but three years later, not a single thing has

changed. Ontarians in every corner of our province should be able to feel secure in their future. They should be confident that the government is actually on their side, that when the government makes a decision, that choice is based on what’s best for Ontarians, not just what’s best for their own political party.

Ontarians deserve answers, Speaker. That’s the very least they deserve from this Liberal government, which has behaved in such a despicable manner. That’s why we need that inquiry today. I ask all members of the House to do the right thing, to stand up for what happened in Quebec, where a Liberal Premier did the right thing and held a commission because of the questions and the concerns that were swirling around their misbehaviour in a particular file. That’s happening here in Ontario, and Ontarians deserve the same kind of response.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I’ve got to tell you, what’s despicable and what’s very disappointing is the behaviour we’re hearing—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask that the third party listen intently to the next speaker and please keep it down.

Back to the member.

Mr. Arthur Potts: What we find here is an opposition party, the third party, which is completely bereft of new ideas on policy development and policy making. I know the people in Beaches–East York are asking important questions about what happened to their NDP. What happened to the party that used to represent them in Beaches–East York? I can tell you, as I go door to door in the community that I represent, in the community that I live in now, they wonder what has happened to the NDP of old. They had represented that riding since the early 1950s as the CCF, with a four-year break with the Tories. They no longer represent it, because they’ve lost their way.

It is so incredible that this leader of a third party that’s going nowhere needs to revert to ancient history two years after an election to be concerned about the behaviours of a government that we have now replaced. I wasn’t here in the period that she’s referring to, and almost everything she speaks about here—the Ornge scandal, the gas plants, all these things—those are in the past.

I was elected in June 2014 into a new government under a new leader, a leader who has integrity and is working very hard to demonstrate, working very hard to bring the accountability, the transparency that we promised, which I signed up for, to run in an election.

We only need to look as far as the Hydro One sale to see how lame this third party has become. I remember in the debate during the course of the election on Rogers TV, I held up the budget book and said to Mr. Prue, the previous member from Beaches–East York, “Mr. Prue, why would you vote against such a progressive budget? This was the campaign—why would vote against it?” He

made it very clear that he voted against it because he could see right there in the preface that we were going to be selling off the assets of the province and he would have nothing to do with it. He knew. If Michael Prue, who sat on the financial committees and toured the province with our members, with SCOFEA, and got the input—if he knew it was happening, why didn't the leader of the third party know it was happening?

1600

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: She wasn't there.

Mr. Arthur Potts: She should have been there. She should have been listening. And her members should have been telling her. And he suffered the indomitable fate of a member who doesn't listen to the people: He lost his seat.

And I liked Michael Prue. I did. I thought he was a good representative. This was never personal about him. He was a good representative. I liked him. But he lost his job because he had to follow blindly along with the misguided policies of this leader and her caucus, who had no plan going into election when they called an early election, no plan at all except to sort of dovetail on some of the most popular progressive things that we were doing. So it became clear during the course of that campaign that we were the new progressive Liberal Party of Ontario.

So when she goes on—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. I recognize the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: With all due respect, I'm not a member of the third party but I do look at their motion, and all the gentleman from Beaches-East York wants to talk about is the former member. For goodness' sakes, could he at least speak to the motion that is before this House today?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'll throw that as a caution to the member to keep referring to the motion being debated this afternoon.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I'd be happy to do so. Of course, as part of the motion, we have to refer to the debate that's associated with it.

I will continue to talk to the motion because, as the leader of the third party was very clear to point out in her motion, there are these things that she calls the "investigations." If you look at the record, those are investigations into events that happened prior to the election. I'm not standing in judgment. It's under the courts. They will take a look, but there haven't been any convictions under this at the moment. There haven't been formal charges laid in the last one. We'll let them do their job. We're not going to supersede them; we'll let them do their job.

In her remarks, the leader of the third party talks about emails that "are being destroyed." How misleading is the statement that they "are being"—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member to withdraw, please.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'll withdraw.

So the leader of the third party said that these e-mails "are being destroyed" when, in fact, the investigation is to events that happened before June 2014. How you have a continuance into an event that happened in the past, I'll leave it up to the *[inaudible]*.

She also mentioned very clearly in her motion about the privatization—she quotes Quebec. They wouldn't privatize power coming from dams in Quebec. We're not privatizing power generation. Does she even know what Hydro One does? It doesn't generate power; it transmits power. We were very clear, or Ed Clark was very clear that he didn't recommend closing the generation of power. He's recommending the partial sale—the leveraging of assets, if you will—of Hydro One, the transmission part of the utility.

I've been disappointed, and I know that people in Beaches-East York are disappointed, that when the leader of the third party comes into my riding with the member from Toronto-Danforth next door and tries to stir up opposition to the Hydro One sale—they get nada. People aren't out there concerned about it. Even in their own—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —because in Beaches-East York they know they've lost their way, and for the betterment of the party, I hope they can find it. But for now, we're happy to take over the—

Mr. Paul Miller: A point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock. Point of order. I recognize the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to thank the Conservative member for standing up and trying to get the person back on track. It seems he's slipping away from the bill again and attacking people personally. I think he might want to go back to what we've been discussing here. Our leader discussed the pitfalls of the bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I would ask again, for a second time, that the member refer to the bill, and I would appreciate if the member would not make personal attacks on members, whether they be present or former.

Back to the member once again.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. As my remarks were coming to a conclusion—in any event, I would be happy to finish my remarks by saying it's not going to happen that we're going to support a motion from the leader of the third party that's dealing predominantly with ancient history.

We're moving forward. We're building Ontario up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion. Let me begin by saying that I don't think it would come as a great surprise if I was to say that I and the members of the third party don't

always agree, but, substantially, there are some issues that we have some like views on. In the case of today, I will be wholeheartedly supporting their motion.

I don't want to waste too much of my time commenting on what the member from Beaches–East York said, but he was completely off the mark and out of line. For him to call this motion that the leader of the third party has put forward—he characterized it as dealing with ancient history. Speaker, nothing in this motion goes beyond the election of this government in 2003. This is their regime: 2003—and particularly, the energy contracts they have signed that have become the most lucrative and the ones that have driven up the price of power the most have been signed by this government under the Green Energy Act since 2009.

This is not a debate about renewable power. We understand the need for clean, green, renewable power. This is a debate about what has gone on within the context of signing the contracts to procure that and other power, and whether or not the Liberal Party should be investigated in an inquiry to determine if there's a connection between the signing of these contracts, the decisions to sign these contracts and the support from those developers to the Liberal Party. It's not complicated. Maybe it's too complicated for the member from Beaches–East York, but it's not that difficult to understand why they brought forward a motion such as this today.

When we start to read the reports and start to get the documentation on the number of fundraisers that have happened in this province, held by the Liberal Party, with energy contractors—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Didn't you have one the other night, John?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for St. Catharines, I won't spend too much time debating it. Of course, I had a fundraiser in my riding on Friday night, and I thank the people who attended it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Did you sing?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I did sing the national anthem; I most certainly did.

We had about 180 people there. It was a hundred dollars a plate. Ullrich's catering did a marvelous job. It was an absolutely delicious meal. People enjoyed it. But I must say, not a single energy developer looking for a contract managed to make it to my fundraiser, perhaps, I say to the member for St. Catharines, because it was just too darn cheap. We're giving them value: a hundred bucks and you're getting fed by Ullrich's. Come on; you can't beat it. But I say to the member, had I held a fundraiser for the princely sum of perhaps just under \$10,000, I might have had some of those people at my dinner.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No, you're not the Minister of Energy.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not the minister; you're right. I can't do anything to sign those contracts. I'm opposition. You've got to be the minister. But if I was the minister—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me.

Stop the clock, please. I have a point of order from the Associate Minister of Health.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I would just ask the member to speak to the motion. I don't know what fundraising has to do with the motion.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Back to the member.

1610

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I say to the associate minister that I am speaking to the motion. The motion specifically talks about energy contracts and the connection to the contracts and fundraising by the Liberal Party. The third party is calling for an inquiry to look into that. It's not enough that we've got five OPP investigations into this government; we actually need an inquiry to determine what has gone on with their fundraising activities.

I want to thank Adrian Morrow at the Globe and Mail for exposing some of this. I want you to listen carefully to this, Speaker: The "Liberals Held More Than 90 Cash-for-Access Fundraisers in Two-Year Span." Ninety.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How much money did they raise?

Mr. John Yakabuski: They raised \$12.5 million. It is no wonder that the Premier is so anxious now to put on the plastic halo and say, "Look at me. I'm going to tighten up all the rules around fundraising for political parties in this province. My bags are full. I can't carry any more. The bank is sending money back because they haven't got a vault big enough for it. We've just got to somehow hold back; the waterfall is overflowing. We've got to build another dam to hold back the money." And don't worry: They'll find an energy contractor to build it. Don't worry.

Here we are in this kind of environment. Let's be serious, Speaker. When you think about these energy contracts, the Auditor General said we've spent \$37 billion more on energy contracts in Ontario than we should have since 2006 under this government. Maybe if I say it slower: \$37 billion.

Interjection: With a "B."

Mr. John Yakabuski: Billion with a "B", \$37 billion; \$9.2 billion more just on renewable energy contracts.

It's not hard to see why. They've taken away the autonomy of a municipality that used to be able to decide whether or not somebody could build a development in their community, but they can't do that anymore. Under the Green Energy Act, the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government is going to make that decision. How much money are they making on these contracts when they're now able, under the new rules, to get a community to sign on as what you call being supportive of that project—a "willing host," as they call it? These companies are actually offering those communities, those municipalities, significant financial inducements that, over the term of a contract, will add up to millions of dollars.

I listened intently to every word the leader of the third party was saying, and she was hearkening back to Adam Beck, when he talked about electricity at cost for the people of Ontario. If electricity was at cost, could you be offering inducements of millions of dollars to a municipality to say, "Hey, we're a welcoming host for your big wind turbines. Come on. Build them here, because we want the cash"? You wouldn't be able to do that, because you wouldn't have that kind of profit.

So who signs the contracts with you that allow you to have that kind of profit?

Mr. Paul Miller: The Liberals.

Mr. John Yakubuski: The Liberal government through their agencies the IESO and the OPA, now all rolled into one. The Liberal government, by extension, signs the contract. The developer—yes, I'm looking right at you, Speaker—makes the money, hundreds of millions of dollars; \$9.2 billion more on renewables alone than they should have made here in the province of Ontario.

What we have is a government that has said, "We'll pay you whatever the heck you want."

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As long as you give us some back.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Well, I'm not saying that. I wouldn't make that kind of accusation, but I'll let people connect the dots. I'll let people connect the dots. "We'll sign a contract with you for an exorbitant amount of money. Oh, by the way, why don't you drop by the old club next week? We've got a little shindig with the Premier—a nice little intimate get together, probably 20, 25 people." "Oh, yes, I'd love that. How much is it? A couple of hundred bucks?" "Well, no. It's \$10,000. But what should that matter to you? Look at all the money you're going to make on this contract." "Well, I might just be able to make it," they say. "Well, if you can make it, don't forget to bring a few of your friends, too."

So that's how you get to \$9.2 billion and \$37 billion. Of course, if none of that is the case, if none of that is true, then I'm quite certain the Premier would have no problem with an inquiry to open the books on every contract, because that's what I'd like to do. What I'd like to do is open the books. I say this to the Minister of Energy, who is going around the province now saying, "Oh, but the new deals we're signing, they're quite competitive. They're competitive with other forms of generation." Well, if you look at just one little bit of that contract, it might look so good. But you know the old saying, "You can't judge a book by its cover"? You've got to flip open that thing and start to read the pages. Well, it's the same thing with the contract. You going to have to get into the nitty-gritty, get into the details. When you get into those details on those contracts, I contend that you're going to find that they're not any better than the old ones. They're going to be just as expensive, but they're just a little bit more cagey, the way they were put together.

But why take my word for it? What would I know? I'll tell you who does know, or who will know. If we're able to get together and put together an inquiry—an inquiry that has the power to call witnesses, that has the power to

demand documentation, that has the power to do an investigation—they will come back to this chamber with their findings. If it shows that the Liberals have done nothing wrong, I'll be the first—well, maybe the second—to get up and apologize. But if I'm right, then we've got a big problem on our hands.

I'll tell you what: The Premier is pretty confident; she's got nothing to risk. I have a feeling that, because of that—she says her hands are as white as the driven snow, that everything is clean over there—they will just support this motion today, we'll have this public inquiry, and we'll get to the bottom of it. And when we tour our ridings all across this province, we'll be able to say to the people, "The Ontario energy contractual system is aboveboard, just like the Liberals said it was." Right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Cet après-midi, c'est assez simple : on est en train de débattre pour savoir si on a besoin d'une commission d'enquête pour la façon dont le Parti libéral donne les contrats qui ont lieu avec l'énergie.

Tout a commencé avec les centrales au gaz. Vous vous souvenez : Mississauga, Oakville, il y avait des centrales au gaz qui auraient dû être là et un contrat avait été signé. On a annulé tout ça et on a refilé la facture à tout le monde en Ontario, une facture de 1,1 milliards de dollars. Donc, cela a mené à la première enquête de la Police provinciale de l'Ontario. Je vous dis « première » parce que vous allez voir qu'il va y en avoir bien d'autres.

En deuxième, ce qui arrive c'est qu'on devait avoir des moulins à vent sur la rive des Grands Lacs. Ça aussi, ça ne plaisait pas trop aux riverains. Une autre élection se passe, le Parti libéral dit : « Ça a bien marché quand on a annulé les centrales au gaz à Mississauga. On a été capable de garder nos sièges. Pourquoi qu'on n'annule pas ces contrats-là? On va être capable de garder nos sièges encore une fois. »

La stratégie a très bien marché. Ils ont annulé ça et ils ont gardé leur siège. Mais, malheureusement, on est rendu à la deuxième enquête de la police provinciale, parce que les avocats ont dit clairement que le contrat a été annulé pour des raisons politiques—pas pour des raisons qui avaient à faire avec les politiques énergétiques, mais pour des raisons politiques. C'est en cours, et c'est notre deuxième enquête de la police provinciale.

1620

Arrive après ça la vente d'Hydro One. La vente d'Hydro One, il faut vraiment que les gens comprennent que 85 % des Ontariens et Ontariennes sont contre ça. Il faut également comprendre que dans la plateforme électorale, la première ministre n'en avait jamais parlé. Ils gagnent l'élection et voilà qu'ils ont tellement besoin d'argent pour financer les bévues d'avant qu'ils ont décidé de vendre quelque chose qui ne leur appartient pas. Ça, ce n'est pas correct et c'est ce qui est en train de se passer malgré l'opposition de tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

On arrive maintenant aux levées de fonds. Avec les levées de fonds, tout le monde peut le lire dans le Globe

and Mail, on voit que 90 levées de fonds ont été faites en 2013 et 2014. On ne sait pas encore combien en 2015, mais j'imagine que ça va être encore beaucoup plus haut que ça. Quatre-vingt-dix levées de fonds en 2013 et on ramasse 12,5 millions de dollars pour le Parti libéral. Mais là, c'est de regarder qui a participé et à quel genre de levée de fonds. Des levées de fonds où on demande 10 000 \$ pour avoir accès à un ministre, c'est inconcevable. Il n'y a pas un morceau de poulet qui vaut 10 000 piastres, peu importe comment on vous le présente puis la grosseur de l'assiette. C'est inconcevable.

M. Gilles Bisson: Peut-être que c'est de la dinde.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Peut-être que c'est de la dinde? Non, il n'y a pas de dinde à 10 000 piastres non plus. C'est évident que ce que les gens achètent avec leur 10 000 \$ est l'accès au ministre. Dans une démocratie, ça ne peut pas être. Ça, et je pourrais continuer avec beaucoup d'autres exemples, c'est la raison pour laquelle on demande une commission d'enquête : parce que les gens en Ontario sont au courant de tout ça. Ils sont au courant des centrales au gaz. Ils sont au courant de la vente d'Hydro One. Ils sont au courant des contrats qui ont été annulés et ils sont au courant également des levées de fonds. Ça leur pose de sérieux problèmes.

Mettons les pendules à l'heure, votons en faveur d'une commission d'enquête et comme ça on va mettre tout le monde au courant de ce qui s'est passé. Si tout est beau, on continue. S'il y a eu des bévues, s'il y a eu des sorties de piste, on se reprend et on change les règles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm very pleased to stand and speak to this motion. I'm proud to provide further clarification on the process for procuring energy in Ontario.

It must be made very clear that neither the Minister of Energy nor the Ministry of Energy or the minister's office have the ability to influence or decide which contracts get selected. When procuring energy in Ontario, the Independent Electricity System Operator is solely responsible for evaluating proposals and selecting the contract. Again, the ministry, the minister and the minister's office have zero influence on the selection process. In fact, the Minister of Energy's office is informed by the IESO which contracts are successful after the proponents are told.

Here in Ontario, our government has made it a priority to ensure that the procurement of energy was done in a fair manner and in the best interests of Ontarians. Our government set a new standard: Energy procurements in Ontario have been run by a third party and overseen by a fairness adviser for many years, beginning with the Ontario Power Authority and continuing with the IESO. Standard offer procurements, including the Feed-In Tariff contract, used an evaluation monitor who provided this same oversight role.

What this means is that when our province decides to procure energy, it is based on the needs and criteria

outlined in the widely consulted and publicly available long-term energy plan. This ensures that energy contracts are decided in a completely arm's-length and non-political way. To ensure fair and objective evaluation, the IESO employs a fairness adviser to provide even further oversight. Look at the latest renewable procurement process administered by the Independent Electricity System Operator, which is completely arm's-length and non-political.

This process was also overseen by an external fairness adviser. The fairness adviser, whose role it is to act "as a neutral, disinterested and independent ... adviser of the procurement process," published a report on March 10, 2016, following the announcement of the contracts. This report is available at the IESO website.

In this report, the fairness adviser said, "We are satisfied that the evaluation of the proposals was conducted strictly in accordance with the process set out in the ... RFP. We detected no bias or favouritism towards or against any particular proponent."

The adviser's 28-page report was very thorough and the adviser's conclusion is: "Overall, we are satisfied that the ... RFP procurement process was conducted in a fair, open and transparent manner and that the IESO took all steps necessary to meet all procurement practices related to fairness, openness and transparency."

When speaking about energy contracts, I think that beyond the process it is important to highlight what has been achieved. The latest announcement of the IESO's renewable energy procurement is a significant achievement for Ontario's energy system. It is the result of years of hard work to develop a process that could enable renewable energy generation at competitive prices across this province. By putting emphasis on price and support of host communities, these results put further downward pressure on the electricity price projections in Ontario's long-term energy plan.

I don't find any fault with any of this process and I do believe that fair process is the way it should be. But the opposition, I'd have to say—it's just like saying that the opposition who put forth a motion to stop the raising of cigarette prices were influenced by the fact that they got a donation from a tobacco company. Is that true? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today in the Legislature and speak to the opposition day motion put forward by the member from Hamilton Centre. The member is asking for this Legislature to put its support behind calling for a public inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy industry. This is something that I know the residents in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton will support. I believe that, in fact, most residents in Ontario would support a public inquiry into how this government has conducted business and managed the energy file in Ontario.

It will, of course, be very interesting to see how the members of the government will decide to vote on this

motion. If the Premier and her ministers have nothing to hide, they won't run from a public inquiry. For the sake of restoring the public's trust in government, the Premier should do the right thing and throw her support behind a public inquiry. Unfortunately, I don't see that happening because, as the motion says, "there are deeply concerning questions about the conduct of the Liberal government in respect of energy contracts." That is putting it nicely, Mr. Speaker.

I support this motion and the call for a public inquiry on the rewarding of energy contracts because the province's energy file and the management of the energy file by the government continues, to this day, to be the biggest source of calls, emails and complaints to my office in Sarnia-Lambton. Hardly a day goes by without a constituent commenting to me or my staff that they can't understand what this government is doing with the Ontario energy sector or why they continue to make decisions that make energy more expensive for them.

We are hearing from more and more people who are being cut off by their power company because they have fallen so far behind on their payments. There is nothing else that can be done to keep their accounts active. As the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said, there is \$9.4 million more just in renewables, and they take pride in this.

It irritates me to no end. I drive the 403 and the 402 to get to Queen's Park every week, and I have to drive through these monstrosities, these monoliths on the skyline. I think about it every day. That's not in my notes but irritates me to no end. I think if the Liberal backbenchers in rural Ontario—some of them are not here now, but if they just stood up and spoke to the McGuinty government and to this government that's here today and said, "We don't want these. We'll sit as independents, or we'll cross the floor." If they had had the intestinal fortitude to do that, I don't think that we'd have seen those windmills in Ontario. That's just a personal rant of mine, because I have to drive by them all the time.

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A perfect example of this paradox occurred just a few days ago on May 1. I'm upset now. That was the day that the Ontario Energy Board said that energy rates would have to increase in Ontario because, during the past winter, Ontario residents managed to conserve too much energy. The average consumer's energy bill will increase approximately \$37.56. Since November 2015, hydro bills have increased an average of \$186.96 a year. That means more money from families and seniors going to pay for basic necessities like light and heat for no reason other than that this government has managed—actually, mismanaged—the energy file and has put its own political agenda, and possibly its party's agenda, ahead of what is best for the people of Ontario.

What we are left with is an Ontario energy system that can be summed up like this: If you use too much energy, you pay more; if you conserve energy, you pay more. People are justifiably confused. Are people in Ontario supposed to conserve energy or are they supposed to use more energy so their hydro rates won't go up?

At the same time that my office is taking calls from seniors and families who can no longer afford the cost of energy to heat their homes, we're reading reports in the media of lavish \$5,000- and \$10,000-per-plate fundraising dinners being hosted by the Premier and the Minister of Energy. My Liberal colleagues say, "Oh, there's no connection." Well, why the heck would someone pay \$5,000 to \$10,000 per person in the energy business if there was no connection between the minister and the Premier being there? I don't know. I come from small-town Ontario, and that's not the way we think down there.

Interjection: That's why they've got a quota.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, they've got a quota; that's right.

Serious allegations have been raised in the media as to the conduct of this government, and the perception is growing that it may have turned doing government business into money-making for the Ontario Liberal Party. I know that people in Sarnia-Lambton feel as if they can no longer trust this government to act with integrity.

The sale of Hydro One is a good example of the government putting its short-term gain ahead of the long-term interests of the people of Sarnia-Lambton. The Premier and the Minister of Finance have proceeded with the fire sale of Hydro One despite opposition from 185 municipalities, including the city of Sarnia and Lambton county, and nearly 80% of Ontarians.

The Financial Accountability Officer projects that selling Hydro One will make the province's fiscal situation worse than if they didn't sell. People in Sarnia-Lambton are wondering: Why, then, is this government pushing ahead with such an unpopular idea?

Why does this government think that they know best? I've been here almost 10 years now, and there's no end to it. I can't believe the hypocrisy of this government every day.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: No, I mean this. I see it. I'll be honest; I don't see why—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Robert Bailey: What did I say? All right, I withdraw whatever I said.

Anyway, I'll get back to my script. I'd better stick to my script here. Was this an idea that was put forward or discussed at one of the incredibly pricey dinners—maybe you won't want to hear this—hosted by the Premier or the Minister of Finance? Was it a move to show a short-term reduction in deficit numbers at the expense of a predictable \$700 million a year in annual revenue in future years?

We had a meeting with someone earlier this week, and they said that they're going to have to earn two and a half times the revenue to make up for this sale. This individual, who's a lot more intelligent than most of us in this room, said that they can't do it.

Similar questions come to mind—how much time do I have?

Mr. Bill Walker: Two minutes.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Oh, okay. Similar questions come to mind when I read the news that seven renewable energy companies that donated more than a quarter of a million dollars to the Ontario Liberal Party over the last few years all received contracts from this government during the last round of renewable procurement.

In Lambton county, which is an unwilling host—unwilling, to all of you over there—for industrial wind turbines, people have serious questions about if the procurement is fair and transparent. Does local input actually matter to the Minister of Energy when awarding contracts?

All of these questions reinforce the need for a public inquiry into the awarding and management of public contracts that fall within the energy portfolio. I support this motion and will be voting in favour.

I hope that the members on the other side of the House will listen for once. Don't listen to the talking points from the corner office on the second floor in the Premier's office; represent your own constituents for once. They're getting these high hydro bills. You know it's not right. Go out and do the right thing when you get the opportunity.

If they support the motion and the Premier calls a public inquiry into the handling and management of public energy contracts, it will go a long way to restoring a sense of trust in this government. Right now, too many people who contact my office don't trust this government. I hear it every day. Honest to God, every day when I go to a public event back home, I hear more complaints about this government and this Premier than the former government and the former Premier. I'm not exaggerating. They don't trust that what's happening in Ontario right now is going to help the province and the people who live here to succeed and thrive in years to come. This is a major concern for me.

I hope that the members can demonstrate, by supporting this motion, that the future of this great province is a concern of theirs as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm very pleased to be speaking to our opposition day motion today. The reason that this motion is before you is because the people of this province deserve some justice, and they will only get justice when they get answers. Going forward, we need to make sure that there aren't further scandals associated with the energy file.

I want to quote from a couple of recent articles. This one is Kelly McParland: "Smart Meters, Another Botched Program on Ontario's Long List of Power Boondoggles." The author writes that Ontarians "ran out of patience and trust in a government that has thoroughly botched the energy file since the day it took office more than 11 years ago.

"There really are too many disasters to recount them all....

"The result of these and so many other boondoggles and fiascos is that the Liberals' credibility when it comes

to energy is less than zero. Take just one example, the 'smart meter' program that is at the heart" of the problem here. "The government told Ontarians it would cost \$1 billion to introduce the meters"—you remember that, Mr. Speaker—"but they would eventually pay for themselves by making it possible to adjust rates and encourage conservation. Instead, as Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk reported in December, the meters cost \$2 billion and have had little if any impact. Only 5% of utilities reported savings, and only 2% to 5% of use has been shifted to cheaper times.

"Not only are they a failure, but the roll-out was a comedy act," this author writes, "with one bungle after another. The benefits, estimated at \$600 million over 15 years, were off by about \$510 million (or 85%)....

"Ontarians thus have every right to assume the people in charge at Queen's Park haven't the remotest clue how to deal with energy policy. Indeed, Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli responded to Ms. Lysyk's report by suggesting she wasn't smart enough to understand the energy business, despite having spent a decade at Manitoba Hydro."

That was the response. It is this flippant response to very serious issues that has prompted our party to come forward and bring this motion to the floor of the Legislature. When you read this motion and it contains the five OPP anti-rackets squad investigations—it boggles the mind that this government has run this province in this manner, and has wilfully done so.

Once again, I must quote, because the numbers keep me up at night: the "Auditor General announced that, between 2006 and 2014, thanks to incompetence and mismanagement on the part of the province's Liberal government, Ontarians overpaid for electricity to the tune of \$37 billion. And over the next 18 years, consumers will be overpaying to the tune of another \$133 billion."

When are the people going to see justice? How are we ever going to recover from the direction that the energy file has gone in this province?

There is no doubt that the Liberal Party has put their interests first and the people's second. The only way that they will get justice is if this motion passes on the floor of this Legislature and we have a public inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy industry. Every Liberal should vote for it if they have nothing to be ashamed of. Vote for this today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, it's a—I'm not going to say it's a pleasure to speak to this motion today. I took a look at the motion before it was read out and then I listened to it. I describe it as a kitchen sink motion: everything but the kitchen sink. In the Catholic church, I think we call it a litany.

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Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: I see I've excited a few members on the other side. Maybe I'd be kinder if I said it was a spaghetti motion—not the same kind of spaghetti at

Barberian's tonight, but another kind of spaghetti that you throw up against the wall and you see what sticks.

I did listen very closely to the leader of the third party's remarks, which were not unlike what I would expect the remarks from the leader of the third party to be. I listened very closely to the line of her argument and what the cornerstone of her debate was all about. What it really was—

Laughter.

Mr. John Fraser: No, I mean it.

The cornerstone was that Liberals are corrupt. That's what she's saying. I disagree with that. I think it's wrong. I think we are having some—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John Fraser: I withdraw.

Interjection: What are you withdrawing?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You called the Liberals corrupt. How dare you?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member from Timmins–James Bay to withdraw.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I certainly do, Speaker. I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm going to try to avoid the duelling withdrawals here.

I'm hopeful that the leader of the third party will see the light and work with us on election fundraising reform. We've had the co-operation of all the other parties in the House. I think that's a very important point to make in this debate, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to say a few words about some of the things the leader of the third party spoke about in her opening speech on the motion, in terms of hydro.

It was interesting this morning. We got to pay tribute to a great parliamentarian from the other side, Leo Jordan. When we were going through some of the things to talk about in his tribute, I pulled out that quote about 1994 this morning. The profit for Hydro One was—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I don't think it's inappropriate, thank you very much.

The member said, "Do you know what? They haven't addressed the debt issue." So if we want to roll back a little bit on hydro, let's remember where we came from. Where we came from was a massive debt, a massive infrastructure debt, insufficient supply—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Bear with me. It's not bigger right now; trust me. Where we're at right now is less debt, a greater supply of power.

The challenge is that when you're building a power system, you're building a complex, big system, and you're basing that on your economic output. You just don't build something three weeks later. After you decide to build it, it takes years, sometimes decades. So you try to plan your power that way. It's a complex system that exists inside North America. What you have to be able to

do is balance your output so that your system works. The member opposite would know that the requirement of Hydro to off-load power at times is as a result of trying to balance that system. I would rather be in the situation of an oversupply than an undersupply, which is where we were at.

I would also like to remind the member opposite that the province of Manitoba and the province of Quebec both have significant, enormous hydroelectric power possibilities. We don't have those same things in Ontario. We rely, for 50%—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We rely on nuclear power for clean, green energy. That's a major difference in terms of our price structure and our costing, and we need to have that, and we need to have energy security and to produce our own energy and not rely on competing jurisdictions.

I want to say that I think the motion is not one I would not expect coming from the opposition. I'm disappointed in it. I think it's wrong-headed, and I won't be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from—

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: That will cost you some day, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much—a pleasure to speak to this opposition day motion by the NDP.

In summary, what they are asking for is: "In the opinion of this House, Ontario should establish a public inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy industry." I certainly support that.

Former MPP and Liberal Minister of Finance Dwight Duncan said, "As Minister of Finance you are in a portfolio where people want to see you, and they'll pay for it." Former MPP and Liberal finance minister Greg Sorbara admits there is a perception in Ontario that the campaign financing system is flawed: "I think the model is old, it's time for a change," he told the CBC.

I just want to get it on record here that, back in October 2015, I presented a private member's bill to actually change third-party advertising, and the entire caucus of the Liberal Party voted against it, including the Premier. Yet today they want to fix the supposed issue that isn't there. They're saying there is no issue, but yet they want to bring legislation forward.

Today, I'm going to talk about the energy policy by the Liberal Party for the Liberal Party. Simply put, it's unaffordable for families and businesses. A \$1,400 average hike in annual bills—we have the fastest bill increases of any electricity customers in North America since this Liberal regime took power. The high rates are also hurting public institutions, schools, hospitals and

long-term-care homes, all of whom are reporting that hydro rates are eating up their budgets and forcing them to make cuts to services at the front line. The public is starting to hear this, at the end of the day.

Massive subsidies were promised in 2009 by the Liberals for new green economy jobs and a wide range of economic opportunities. Instead, the Green Energy Act has sucked \$2 billion out of the treasury by way of subsidies, has eliminated some 300,000 manufacturing jobs and, sadly, has tripled energy rates. Subsidies to wind could hit \$8 billion over the next decade and \$13 billion over the next 20 years. Samsung, which posted \$217 billion in revenue last year, is expected to triple its wind capacity in Ontario, and the subsidies that go along with it, in the next couple of years. Thank you, George Smitherman.

The global adjustment is now over \$1 billion. Damage to the ratepayers for such policies has been significant, and even, I think, from the Liberals, if they're honest, undeniable.

It saddens me when I talk to my constituents back in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and really get into this file, and they learn through us that, actually, we pay other jurisdictions—that there's still this anomaly out there that people believe we give our power away. No, it's even worse: We actually pay jurisdictions in the United States and Quebec to take our surplus power, which makes them doubly competitive against our manufacturing industry. It's no doubt why those manufacturers are leaving Ontario for other jurisdictions.

The demand has fallen by 10% as businesses flee the province's high rates. We're paying generators to sit idle in an effort to limit the power. Spilled power, if you will, has increased by 88% between 2013 and 2015—enough to power 330,000 homes last year. Yet the Liberal government in our great province has signed up for another 2,700 megawatts of wind on top of the 3,065 megawatts already in commercial operation. Let's not forget: Both wind and solar are intermittent sources of power. There's not one person over there—although I trust, perhaps, that the Minister of the Environment may tell us he can control the wind and the sun. But, Mr. Speaker, we all know that is not the truth. Half a billion dollars a year that we actually pay others to take our surplus, and yet we're putting more onto the grid.

It's a bonanza for the energy companies, but a loss for the ratepayers. Sixty households in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound had their hydro shut off in the fall of 2014. Soaring prices also saw the local United Way bail out families for \$300,000 in hydro bills. This is not a good situation, and it's getting worse all the time.

The Owen Sound Chamber of Commerce's most recent report warned that one in 20 businesses expect to shut down in the next five years due to electricity prices—sorry, that's chambers across Ontario.

The Auditor General suggests that we are going to overpay. We, as the taxpayers, will overpay—not the Liberal government; we, as taxpayers, who actually pay the freight—by \$133 billion over the term of the FIT

program. They've overcharged already by \$37 billion, and the Liberal mistakes will actually cost us, as I've just said, \$133 billion by 2023.

She also said that we've been bilked out of \$9.2 billion for the Liberal government's green energy program. This is in stark contrast to the Liberal government's promise that industrial scale wind and solar power would come at minimal cost to Ontarians and would increase their bills by about 1%. This was the actual quote and promise used by both former Premier Dalton McGuinty and his then energy minister, George Smitherman.

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Mr. Speaker, to put a little more flavour in here—because we've talked about this ad nauseam, although the Liberals won't listen to us—I'm going to put a little bit of a spin on it. This is almost 50 shades of green. Liberals have the whip in their hand. The only buy-in required to set up a wind project anywhere in Ontario is one from the Liberal Party. A municipality has no way to stop an industrial wind project even if they declare their community an "unwilling host."

My colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London—Dutton Dunwich didn't want it and ended up with them, and down the road where they actually had a willing host community, they didn't end up with theirs. One hundred municipalities, mostly rural and in our PC ridings, passed motions to declare their communities as non-willing hosts, but again were snubbed by this government.

Wind power projects are cancelled only at the whim of the Liberal Party's secret circle of advisers—Mike Crawley, a former Liberal Party president, was also chief of International Power Canada, a wind development—and have been cancelled in Liberal-held ridings. In your riding, I believe, Mr. Speaker, if I'm not mistaken. One such is now being investigated by the OPP for allegedly destroying records around these decisions.

Mr. Speaker, it's shades of greed. The government has provided renewable energy contracts to seven wind companies who had donated a quarter of a million to Liberal Party coffers. Three wind companies who hadn't donated to the Liberal Party did not receive a single contract.

The point is, the average taxpayer can't win with the Liberals unless you have \$6,000 to spare, or \$10,000 for a ticket for one-to-one access to the Premier and her Minister of Energy. In the words of one of my constituents, Jeffrey Sicard, "In two years, under the Liberal government of Kathleen Wynne, our family has reduced daily average hydro consumption by as much as 37%, yet our bill has increased by as much as 38% and we pay as much as 56% in fees and taxes. I ask, when will this insanity end?"

The Liberals have forgotten to respect the opinions of Ontarians after 13 years in government. That much is clear from the way they treat the good people of this province. A prime example is that 85% of the people of Ontario, when polled, say they don't want them to sell off Hydro One. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? They continue down that road.

It's short-term gain for long-term pain, in spite of evidence from the Financial Accountability Officer—their officer—that this sale will not build infrastructure and will increase the deficit, and in spite of opposition from 185 municipalities, including my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and this includes municipalities of Owen Sound, Meaford, Hanover, Grey Highlands, West Grey, Chatsworth, Georgian Bluffs and Southgate, all 'who voted against the sale of Hydro One. The Ontario public did not support the fire sale and still does not support the sale.

My constituent Richard Lip writes, "The Liberals must reconsider its plans. They did not campaign on a platform to privatize hydro and need to be held accountable for their decision to act against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of Ontarians."

Another constituent, Helen King of Owen Sound, said, "Rate increases discourage any new industry from coming to Ontario and will likely be the cause of higher unemployment due to industry relocating out of this province. This is equivalent to me selling my car so that I can pay my hydro bill, and then having no means of getting to work to earn a living. Once the money is gone, there is no way to generate more. Wynne should be replaced with someone that has common sense."

Steven Cole concluded, "They need that hydro sale money desperately to pay the debt and avoid public embarrassment and financial complication of a long, looming debt payment default."

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we've got so many things that I could still talk about, but we want to have a call for an inquiry. I support the NDP's opposition day motion, and I will turn it over to my colleague to finish my debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a couple of minutes to talk about this very important motion. Really, Speaker, what this motion does is that it gives this Liberal government an opportunity.

If you look at it like an opportunity, it gives them and the Premier an opportunity to actually clear their conscience. It gives this Liberal government an opportunity to be accountable and transparent. It gives you a way out, because we are asking for this public inquiry on behalf of Ontarians who have questions about these energy contracts. It's extremely reasonable, what we're asking, and we're giving you a way to clear your conscience, to clear the air.

The Premier had promised to do things differently, Speaker. Here's your opportunity. Let's have some transparency and accountability. That's what people are looking for from a government. I hate to say this, but you have failed on that mark. You have let people down. If you're listening to the people in your riding, they are telling you—I know they're telling all of us here, Speaker. They're calling us and they're saying, "We want this government to be accountable for their actions."

This is a way out. Here's the motion from our leader. It's a very reasonable motion. It's laid out very clearly. It gives you a step-by-step, reasonable argument as to why a public inquiry is needed. Being an MPP in this Legislature, this would actually restore my faith in government and in democracy. That's what this motion is trying to do: It's trying to restore the faith of the people of Ontario in this government. We're doing you a favour.

Vote for this motion. Help yourselves. Help the people of Ontario. Put faith back into this government and put democracy back in this Legislature.

I hope that this government will support this motion. Thank you to the leader of the New Democrats for bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: When you look at global rankings of democracies for integrity and honesty, the government of Canada and its provinces rank about the highest in the world.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Your government is at the bottom of the barrel.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is what the NDP have become: the denigration of democracy.

We have accountability. We have parliamentary budgetary officers. We have Environmental Commissioners. We have—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: They don't listen much. They like democracy because they like to talk. They just don't like to listen. Mr. Speaker, you will notice that these great socialists—people who are not arrogant and who love to listen—can't stop talking when a Liberal gets up. You'll notice that when they spoke, we listened carefully to what they said. So I think they've just skewered their own credibility on that.

Let's look at what has happened here. We have—and you talk to your parents or your grandparents—a democracy here that is the envy of the world, human rights legislation that's the envy of the world. We hold the confidence and trust of the people of Ontario, because we have to earn it in an election. It's a little special—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Can we stop the clock?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please.

Excuse me.

Point of order: I recognize the member from Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I read this motion very carefully. It doesn't say anything about the history of democracy, which the Minister of the Environment seems to want to talk about. Maybe he'd like to respond.

The member for London-Fanshawe said there are very good reasons to restore faith in this democracy—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Perhaps he could speak to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I listened intently.

Back to the Minister of the Environment, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The entire premise of the last speaker was that, somehow, this is really to restore faith in democracy. I'm challenging the basic premise.

When I worked at the Canadian Urban Institute, I worked around the world and I worked in places where democracy is broken, corrupt. To actually make the outrageous statements that these folks make about a democracy that people have died for for generations, and a very strong election, is just the level of hyperbole and nonsense that often goes on around here—

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me.

It's not a point of order. Back to the minister, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I guess I've struck a nerve, Mr. Speaker.

Let's look at what has happened. We have rebuilt the transmission system with \$8 billion. When I was mayor of Winnipeg, and to be fair—

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. We have a point of order now that the member is in his chair.

I recognize the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: With all due respect to the minister, for him to say that people fought and died for democracy—I'm offended. My father and his two brothers were in World War II—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. That's not a point of order.

Minister, before you stand and before we start the clock, I recognize that this can be somewhat of a contentious motion. I appreciate healthy debate. There are certain individuals, I know, who can perhaps—I'll use my own term—incite a riot in here. I'm going to ask that we exercise caution in not so much what we say, but how we say it, so that we don't infuriate emotions within members of the opposition. I don't want to have to go ahead and say, "Go ahead and make my day."

Minister, back to you.

1700

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it's very, very helpful that you're reminding us this isn't a race to the bottom. I have never in my remarks suggested a motive or any misdoings by any of the members opposite. I have fundamentally disagreed with their position and have been very tolerant when motives have been ascribed to some of us in cabinet here that are rather unfair.

The \$8 billion we've invested in transmission lines was historic. To be fair to the NDP, they have some integrity on this, in the following sense: If you look at how your party in government—which I supported when I lived in Manitoba—invested in transmission and maintained the hydroelectric system, they did a very good job, and they're to be credited for it. We unfortunately took over from a party that had massively dis-

invested. As a matter of fact, we're spending \$13 billion a year now on infrastructure. Under the last government, it was as little as \$1 billion or \$2 billion. How was that reflected? One of the largest areas in which that was reflected was in the fact that our transmission lines—as someone has said, if they were apples, they would have been rotting on the tree.

I remember the reports because when we were rebuilding our municipal hydro utility and dams and transmission, I remember the studies coming onto my desk as mayor of Winnipeg, pointing out the grave level of underinvestment in Ontario and the infrastructure deficit that was happening year after year.

One of the big things that has driven costs has been the massive investment—over \$8 billion—just to repair our transmission lines. That was not adding one kilometre of power connection.

The second thing is that we were going through a restructuring of hydro, when I was mayor in Winnipeg, at the same time that there was a restructuring going on here in Ontario. They were very different. We were working on the consolidation of a public utility, which I know my friends in the third party would also agree with. There was a massive deregulation, privatization, and stranded assets being created here which involved well over \$20 billion—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It's \$23 billion.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —\$23 billion, my experienced friend from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale reminds me. We inherited that problem.

I remember my friend Ann Mulvale in Oakville, who was the president of AMO. She and I went for lunch, and she was just going through what she called the rate crisis at that time of what was going to have to happen to rates in Ontario over the next 20 years as a result of those kinds of things.

I think there are a lot of things that we agree on with the third party. I just think that this extended hyperbole is a bit problematic.

The other thing is, our big priority on this side of the House was to decarbonize the electricity system, which we've largely done, and that was the biggest reduction in greenhouse gas emissions: closing coal plants and introducing into this aged transmission system the challenge of bringing solar on and bringing wind on—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock. A point of order: I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have great respect for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I listened to him talk about being the former mayor of Winnipeg 10 times, and getting rid of the coal-burning plants. It has got absolutely nothing to do with the motion that is supposed to be under debate on the floor this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Back to you, Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The suggestion that somehow all of that work, all of those contracts were mishandled is really problematic to me. I don't agree with that.

It was interesting. We hear about gas plants. I don't think I've heard a speech in this House from an opposition member that hasn't had the words "gas plant" in it. It's so incredibly tiresome. Mr. Speaker, do you know what? One of the reasons I think this is problematic is because in that election, both opposition parties committed to cancelling gas plants.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: "Done, done, done."

Hon. Glen R. Murray: "Done, done, done." I remember the videos. I remember them because I was a candidate in that election.

I'm amazed. I don't know what they were going to do—have a bake sale to pay for it? Use Monopoly money? I don't know. But we were the only people who had numbers out there, and they criticized our numbers but they produced nothing. During the election campaign, it was a free lunch—but it's the sense of the difference about maybe why we win some of these elections and they don't is that we're prepared to take responsibility for our decisions and we're not obsessed with process.

If you recognize that in the world right now, having the complexity of an energy system that was reliant on nuclear power, which is a challenging area right now with refurbishment—that's a very expensive path to go down. With redistributive energy, we're looking at a very challenging future in that area and closing coal plants. We did this during the worst recession in the history of this country since the Great Depression. The complexity of this was extraordinarily difficult.

I think my friends in the third party remember being in power when we had a huge economic downturn, not of their fault. It was Bob Rae and many of my friends over there—Frances Lankin and others. That was a hard time to be in government, and we have some empathy, I think, with each other about what it's like when the global economy flips and puts Ontario's industrial base at risk. We provide a philosophy of hopefulness in that. When I was at the World Bank, everyone I talked to looked to Ontario. They said, "It's amazing what you're doing right now. You've closed coal plants. You've introduced green energy. You've played a leadership role in this. You're conducting yourself in an amazing way on the international stage."

Now, on the carbon-pricing issue, which is another area where we have worked well with the third party—I try to be as kind as I can to my friends over there, because generally I think they're a very likable bunch of people with good intentions and good principles, and I actually enjoy working with them. I think there is a lot less that separates us. But I always find that when we get into these process things where we can't seem to deal with actually working towards a powerful vision of the future and implementing something bigger, I find it quite disappointing. I won't use any stronger language than that.

We do disagree on some things. The inclusion of a broadened-ownership group with Hydro One is a solution

of taking capital from an asset which has less public utility, pardon the pun, and putting it into things like transit which are in great demand. At a time when the limitations to raise revenues are limited and the ability to borrow money is limited, you need to do these kinds of things. We can have an honest disagreement about that, but to my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh, who I also respect, who has brought an elevated debate here and I hold in quite high regard: It's not necessary to ascribe terrible things to people's motives.

I'm not a wealthy person. I've never made a penny in politics outside of my paycheque, and my character is important to me. I work with 107 very honest people in here and I hold all members of the third party in that group. I don't think people come here untoward, but this idea of suggesting that somehow when you meet with someone, or take a meeting with them or have a fundraiser, which all of us do, that somehow you've compromised your integrity and your character—well, I've had a lot of careers and I've been accused of making mistakes, and I've made some in my life, but I have always conducted myself in a way that would make my family proud, and lived that.

What bothers me most is that when you can't just disagree on something like Hydro One, you have to attack people's motives and assassinate their character. I find that most disappointing. I haven't heard the member for Windsor–Tecumseh do that, and I hope that becomes infectious because there are a number of people, including the member from Toronto–Danforth, who actually don't have to get in the mud to make a point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from—it's just one of those days.

Interjection: Prince Edward–Hastings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Prince Edward–Hastings. Thank you.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on this NDP opposition day motion, which really strikes at the heart of the problem with the Liberal government in Ontario these days: Nobody trusts this government. There are a lot of reasons why nobody trusts this government, but the biggest reason right now is there are five—count them, five—OPP investigations into this government, many of them dealing with the subject matter that is in the opposition day motion put forward by the leader of third party.

Let's walk back to June 2011. There was an election that was in the offing. There were a number of seats that were possibly in a precarious position in the Scarborough area. There was an offshore wind project that was being proposed by Trillium wind power, which is one of the scandals that we're dealing with in the Legislature and that the OPP are investigating this government on now: the deletion of documents related to the cancellation of that offshore wind project in Lake Ontario.

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June 2011: The Minister of Energy comes from Scarborough. A decision is made, just before the election,

to cancel these offshore wind projects. Not one red cent came from Trillium wind power, so they had no problem cutting ties with this company to save Liberal seats in Scarborough.

Let's fast-forward to the election campaign, Mr. Speaker. There were a couple of very controversial gas plants that were planned just to the west of Toronto, in Oakville and Mississauga. In the middle of the election campaign—not even before—the Premier announced he was cancelling the Mississauga plant to save not one, not two, not three, but five Liberal seats. It was only going to cost \$40 million, though, according to members of the Liberal government. It ended up costing the taxpayers of Ontario over \$1 billion to cancel the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville.

People in Prince Edward-Hastings are saying to me every day, “Mr. Smith, why is my electricity bill going through the roof?” Do you want to know why? It's because these Liberals are more worried about their own hides than they are about the people of Ontario, and that's a fact. The \$1 billion-plus used to cancel the gas plants in Mississauga—and when Trillium power is successful in its lawsuit, that's going to go on your hydro bill as well. The people of Ontario are footing the bill so that these Liberals can save their own hides—their own seats—in election campaigns.

But more than that—let's go on; there's more—they decide to sell off Hydro One. They didn't run on that in any election, but they decide to sell off Hydro One. The syndicate that put together the Hydro One initial public offering, the IPO, made \$29 million on that deal. Then we learned about these little soirees with the finance minister and the Minister of Energy that rake in \$165,000 for the Liberal Party, and you wonder why people continue to wonder if this government is on the up and up? It's because of stories like that, or because of the story that was front-page in the *Globe and Mail* today, where we learned there wasn't just a handful of these private soirees; there have been 98 of these private soirees raking in \$13.5 million between when this Premier took office and the end of 2014. That doesn't even count the gold rush that's been going on in 2015-16. They've been raking in millions and millions of dollars in these pay-to-play soirees, and they've been exposed by the members of the media. That's why people are skeptical about the intentions of this government. The people of Ontario are paying the soaring electricity bills, not these guys. Meanwhile, the Liberal Party is benefiting to the tune of millions of dollars.

Earlier this the year, we learned about a special little soiree with the Minister of Energy where he had eight people. Eight people showed up and paid almost \$7,000 apiece for this little dinner, Mr. Speaker. And do you know what? I'm just going to bet that every one of those companies has a power project somewhere in Ontario that's bringing them in millions of dollars. That's why we need a public inquiry in Ontario. That's why we need to support this motion today. And if these guys actually believe they are snow white, that they've done nothing

wrong, then they will agree with this motion put forward by the third party today. If they believe they've done nothing wrong, then they'll agree to this.

I had to laugh when the member from Barrie was speaking earlier. She said, “All these decisions, when it comes to power, aren't made by the Liberal Party. They're made by what used to be the OPA or the IESO. Those decisions are made by them.”

She wasn't here during the gas plant scandal, when it became very clear that the Liberal government is the one making these decisions. They're the ones who admitted—the Premier herself—her Premier—admitted that these decisions were being made for political reasons. So if she thinks that we're naive enough to think that they're not the ones making the decisions—we're not falling for it. The evidence is out there. It needs to come out in a public inquiry.

I had to laugh because the Minister of the Environment was speaking just a few minutes ago and contradicted everything that the member from Barrie had said earlier when it comes to who is making these decisions. They're not on the same page at all when it comes to the various scandals that are going on.

Do you know what? At the end of the day, I'm going to put it to them like this: The NDP and the Progressive Conservatives believe that there should be an inquiry. Why doesn't the Liberal government believe that there should be an inquiry? All evidence is pointing to a public inquiry into how this has all taken place.

I'll leave the rest of the time for my friend from Kitchener-Conestoga.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to weigh in on the NDP opposition day motion calling for the establishment of a public inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy industry. We've certainly had a very enthusiastic debate so far today, which is great.

I'm going to take us back in time a little bit and remind us about Sir Adam Beck and how this conversation first started. It was about power at cost. It was about power for the people. It was about power for the public and power for business.

But this is a government that doesn't actually want the public to have any power. And I would say that it's not just about electricity and that kind of power; it's about democratic voice and involvement in committees, anything—any kind of public power, this government wants to keep for themselves.

Also, Sir Adam Beck wanted to keep hydro safe. He wanted to keep it from the politicians. He wanted to keep it safe from the politicians. In fact, even on his deathbed, he talked about wishing that he could have built a fence to keep it safe and protected from partisan politics. And yet, here we are. We watched this government doing away with all of that good, solid work for power and for the people—for their own political purposes, it would seem.

We've heard today that the government is ignorant of the will of the people, but I would say that it isn't ignorant, Mr. Speaker, in their defence. I'd say it is blatant disregard. I would say that there isn't anyone in this Legislature who is ignorant of the will of the people, but I would say that they are burying their heads in the sand when it comes to this. They're not answering their constituency phones. They're not lifting the lid off and looking around.

I'll leave us with this: We had heard earlier about the fundraisers at \$10,000 a plate. Imagine the chicken that that must—imagine that dinner. I'd say that this about the goose that laid the golden egg, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's always a pleasure to have a chance to stand in my place and speak to—actually, Speaker, let me rephrase, if I may. Most of the time, it's a pleasure to have the chance to stand and speak on behalf of the good people of Vaughan. Today, though, I have to say that the sheer bizarreness of the particular motion put forward by the leader of Ontario's NDP makes it difficult to have reasonable debate.

Earlier, the member from Oshawa talked about looking back into history and talking about what might have occurred at some point in Ontario's history. Speaker, I've got to tell you, it's disappointing but not terribly shocking, I suppose, that when I listen to the NDP speaking both on this motion and so many other bizarre motions that their leader, Andrea Horwath, has put forward since her epic disastrous electoral result in June 2014, it's very similar to what I hear from the Conservative Party on this and other matters. Again, it's not shocking that they would be joining forces on this, because when you think about it, particularly over the last few months, it's motions like this, it's the questions that we hear in the House day after day, it's the debate that they would rather engage in which I think speaks to the evasive nature of where they stand as political parties and as MPPs at this point in Ontario's juncture.

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Interjection.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's interesting that the member from Hamilton would talk about elections, Speaker. Of course, I'm proud to stand in a caucus that has now been successful in four out of the four last election campaigns, and he's sitting in a caucus that has been relegated to that status now consistently since 2003, and for good reason. That good reason is embedded in this actual motion itself.

At no point in the last number of months has either Patrick Brown or Andrea Horwath chosen to explain to Ontarians what they would do if they had the chance to lead this province. They haven't talked about how they would build transit or transportation infrastructure. They have not talked about how they would build stronger publicly funded education. They have refused to acknowledge that it's important to have strong publicly funded health care.

They have spent all of their time and all their energy coming up with mythological motions like the one that we are debating here today, throwing mud at the wall and casting aspersions at every turn. It's not shocking to me, Speaker; it's disappointing. I say "not shocking" because I can only surmise that if I had no agenda and I had no plan, and I had no shame, I would be doing what Andrea Horwath and Patrick Brown do on a daily basis in this Legislature.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

I'll just remind the minister that we refer to members in the Legislature by their riding or by their title, but not by first or last names. Thank you very much.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You're 100% right.

Just to make sure that I emphasize this point: If I was somebody who had no plan, no agenda, no way of understanding how to build up Ontario, if I was one of those individuals, then I would fit quite nicely into the Conservative caucus and the NDP caucus.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: And just so we're clear about this: The people of Ontario consistently, since 2003, have not been fooled by these games, whether we're talking about the point at which the former leader of the Conservative Party, Mr. Hudak, standing alongside the current leader of the official opposition in Barrie during the last election campaign when they jointly promised, almost giddily, that they were going to fire 100,000 Ontarians, or whether we're talking about the leader of Ontario's NDP, the leader of the third party, who has put forward today's farcical motion.

At the end of the day, during that last election campaign—they're calling for a public inquiry. Well, where I come from, an election campaign represents the single most effective inquiry that the public can ever engage in. Not surprisingly, in 2014, when the people of Ontario had a chance, over the course of nearly 30 days, to review the Ontario NDP's nine-page platform—11 pages if you include both covers—they found it wanting. On health care, on education, on transit, on the environment, on minimum wage and on all of the things that they refuse to talk about to this very day, they found that leader and that party wanting. That's why that party sits where it does in today's Legislature.

I should say, as a result of all that, as a result of both the Conservatives' and the NDP's unwillingness to talk about where they want to take the province, it's not surprising, but it's terribly disappointing.

Mr. Paul Miller: Five investigations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, second time.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's terribly disappointing that they would put forward motions like this because we all

know, on this side of the House, and 13 million Ontarians know, Speaker—

Mr. Paul Miller: Five investigations: honourable, honest? Five investigations against your party. Wow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please.

I will give the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek the benefit of the doubt because I doubt if you heard my warning the second time. There was a reason why you didn't hear. So I would ask now that you listen intently, and I'll turn it back to the minister.

Continue, please.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I was saying, it's not surprising, although it is terribly disappointing. I can only imagine, as I was listening and reviewing the opposition day motion put forward by the leader of the third party today, what it must be like to sit in one of their strategy meetings and have a discussion about how they're going to go forward on a daily basis.

I can only imagine. It must be a conversation that goes something like, "Oh my goodness. Today, what can we throw at the wall to make sure that nobody in Ontario understands how bankrupt we are when it comes to progressive ideas? What can we throw at the wall to suggest, by way of insult, by way of suggestion, by way of doing all kinds of zany things? What can we do? What can we do today to make sure that nobody in the province understands that we have no plan, that we have no clue and that we have no idea or concept about how we will take Ontario forward?" It's a result of that kind of strategy session, if I can call it that, that results in this kind of motion being put forward.

I'm not in the habit of giving my opponents advice, but I will try just this one time. Do yourselves a favour: Dig down a little bit deeper, and try to do better. The people of Ontario need functioning parties to debate the issues that matter. You should be able to do better. Try to move forward. Try to have a departure from what you put forward, because this government is progressive. We're moving the province forward. This motion deserves to be defeated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Harris: Steven for leader.

Thank you, Speaker, for that opportunity to bring the temperature down just slightly and join in today's energized discussion calling for a public inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy industry, a call that follows the recent launch of the fifth OPP anti-rackets squad investigation into this government's dealings. That's right, Speaker. I know we've heard it over and over again this afternoon, but no matter how many times you say it, the fact that this government has somehow managed—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Member from Hamilton Mountain, I know you have a conversation going on with perhaps the member from Barrie. I

would ask that you keep it down so that I can hear the member from Kitchener–Conestoga debate your motion.

I would encourage the member now to continue, and I would encourage participation and co-operation amongst the legislators. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Harris: The fact that this government has somehow managed to muddy itself with a record five OPP investigations bears repeating.

Of course, the recent developments that have led to an OPP probe into the Wynne Liberals' handling of Trillium Power energy corporation provides the basis for the latest investigation. They follow a long, winding road of scandal and unaccountability that runs completely counter to the principles of openness and transparency, those same items that this Liberal government was in fact elected on.

Speaker, I would like to take us back, of course, in time and remind folks where it all began, because as we are speaking to the call for a public inquiry today, there is no doubt that the lack of accountability and transparency we are addressing has roots dating back many years, back, in fact, to the granddaddy of the Liberal OPP scandal trail—so to speak—better known as the Ontario Liberal gas plant cancellations.

Who knew back in 2010 that the seeds for the scandal-ridden ride this government has taken us on were in fact being planted? In fact, it was on October 7, 2010, that those first seeds took root as the Liberals positioned themselves ahead of the 2011 election in announcing the cancellation of the proposed Oakville gas-fired power plant. Eleven months later, in the middle of the Ontario election campaign, the other shoe dropped as our current finance minister announced plans to scrap a partially built gas plant in Mississauga, a move that would inevitably save his seat. Once election victory was secured—and I remind you that I remember hearing how President Obama spent a billion dollars to get elected, a billion dollars of money in the US, privately raised, to get elected the leader of the free world. We spent a billion dollars to get Charles Sousa elected.

Once that election victory was secured, the unravelling of months and years of work to prevent damning emails charting the course of the scandal led to criminal charges for two former senior Liberal staff and a prorogation by a former Premier as he headed for the exits.

Further, years of opposition work in committee eventually revealed the fact that, in the end, taxpayers spent \$1.1 billion to cancel the gas plants that would save Liberal seats simply to keep them in power. The price of power, Speaker? It's \$1.1 billion and counting. Imagine the health care, the education or the IBI therapy \$1.1 billion could buy.

So it was in 2013 that we were told to expect a new era from the new Premier who promised accountability, who promised transparency and told us, "Social justice is what drives me; it's why I'm here." Close to three years later, we're left to wonder what happened to that Premier. Where did she go? In fact, soon after she took power, we were sent back down that same hole into the repeated cycle that has seen the Wynne Liberal government use

taxpayers' money to fit their political ends, rejecting those principles of accountability and transparency they had so recently spoken to and then spinning like a top until the police step in.

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Five times now, five OPP investigations, and yet still we see the same old song and dance from this government, who instead of living up to the Premier's commitment to transparency took steps to ensure the fulfillment of her own other statement: "My plan is to govern as long as I can." Indeed, we see it today as Liberals jump up to reject calls for a public inquiry into their lake-bound wind energy decision-making, just as we saw it only a few weeks ago with the rejection of our calls for an inquiry into political financing reform.

Here's a party that was voted in on openness and transparency working to ensure their cabinet ministers have specific monetary targets to raise in donations for the benefit of the Ontario Liberal Party and the Ontario Liberal fund. While the Premier and her energy minister are meeting with energy sector companies for one-on-one access at a cost of \$6,000 per ticket on the one hand, they're turning around and making energy policy decisions meeting their own ends on the other. And so we have one of the banks that ran the lucrative privatization of Hydro One—a privatization that most Ontarians are staunchly set against—promoting a \$7,500-per-person fundraiser for the two Ontario provincial cabinet ministers who are in fact in charge of the sale.

Speaker, the fire sale of Hydro One has seen opposition from 185 municipalities and nearly 80% of Ontarians, and yet they move ahead anyway, while feeding the Liberal coffers at every step. The event on December 7, which featured Finance Minister Charles Sousa and Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli, may have raised about \$165,000 for the Liberals, but the fact is that we will continue to pay for the Hydro One fire sale as the province loses out on approximately \$700 million in revenue every year.

We have families that have children with autism on our doorstep. We have those with rare diseases calling out for the government's help. We have people in need in so many sectors, and yet we continue to see the Wynne Liberal government looking at their own needs first.

It's for these reasons that you continue to hear calls for public inquiries, because quite frankly, OPP investigations and public inquiries are about the only things that seem to get this government's attention.

Here again, we saw many of the same Liberal players alleged to be involved in program cancellations to meet their own partisan needs cancelling provincial agreements to Trillium's offshore wind development in a Liberal riding to boost party support, leaving the taxpayer to pick up the bill. Once again, we see discoveries of emails that may have been wiped out during the infamous gas plants deletion. Once again, we see allegations of deliberate destruction of evidence to cover tracks. Did you notice a theme here, Speaker?

We all continue to wonder how a Premier and a government that said they would be so different have turned out to be so much the same old same old, choosing their party over the people of Ontario, political gain over needed programs and program enhancements. Again and again, we see the Wynne Liberals looking out not for the best interests of Ontario, but for their own political survival, while leaving Ontario taxpayers to foot the bill.

As they say, the truth will set you free. For the sake of restoring the public's trust, of living up to the repeated commitments to openness and transparency, the Premier should do the right thing, call an inquiry and let the system work to ensure the truth really gets out there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to put my two cents in here, if I could. We're talking about energy policy, we're talking about the destruction of records and we're talking about five anti-rackets squad OPP investigations. We're talking about the deletion of emails. We're talking about the wiping of the hard drives. We're talking about a committee that was looking into that, and on the eve of the appearance of the two main witnesses, the government prorogued and the witnesses never got to testify.

We've got five OPP investigations—five that we know of. What we're asking for is a public inquiry, the same as they held in Quebec on the construction industry. If you have nothing to hide, you shouldn't be blocking this call. Clear the air. Let's get it out there, and then we can all move on. The media is out there every day coming up with more and more stories about the secrecy of the fundraising, who attended and how that led to changes in policy. Well, if you have nothing to hide, then open it up.

I know your party coffers are full. Nobody on this side of the House has suggested for a moment that anyone over there padded their own personal pockets. That hasn't come up from this side of the House. The party coffers are full. Nobody suggested that you pocketed the money yourself.

You can't judge a book by looking at the cover, but you can judge a cover-up by opening the books. Open the books. Let's lift the veil. Let's let the light shine in. Come on: Hold a public inquiry and convince the people of Ontario you have nothing to hide.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've been in the House long enough to remember when the New Democratic Party used to deal with issues. When Stephen Lewis was the leader, for instance, it was the preservation of agricultural land and important issues like that. They've now been reduced to drive-by smears and scandalmongering, which is most unfortunate because, even though I didn't always agree, I always liked the issues that the NDP raised in this House.

I remember that the member for Windsor-Tecumseh used to cover politics in Ontario, and he provided a good balance of coverage at that time. I've got to give him

credit for that. He would remember when his New Democratic Party used to be a party of issues instead of dealing with smears day after day, which this essentially is.

I don't mind the fundraising. Tonight my friend Gilles Bisson is holding a fundraiser at Barberian's at \$700 a person. I don't mind that. The NDP has had \$10,000-a-person small gatherings at places like the Palais Royale and the Gardiner Museum and the art gallery. I don't mind that.

What I do mind is you saying that it's okay for you to do it but not for others. There's a word I can't use because it's unparliamentary and I wouldn't use it. I wouldn't even want to say what it is.

Interjection: Does it start with "H"?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It starts with "H".

As for getting lectures from the Conservative Party, they had a fundraiser at the Albany Club at \$10,000 a person—intimate. They had one for \$5,000 at Barberian's. At the Toronto Leader's Dinner, donors were encouraged to pay \$25,000 for a victory table—\$10,000 more than a normal table. By donating \$30,000 or more, attendees could score an invite to the private reception with their leader, Patrick Brown.

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A point of order: I recognize the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm a little concerned that the minister is way off track about talking about the motion. He's talking about all these dinners. That really doesn't have anything to do with the motion. So if he could get back to it, we'd appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Member, I'll turn it back to you.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you. The Speaker understands that's exactly what it does because that's what you've been implying. Other speakers on this side have described how contracts are awarded, independent of any political considerations. That's the way they are done in Ontario. It's totally independent.

They donate to you. I have a list of the people who donated to the NDP. You might be surprised at some of them. I don't think that because the Canadian Labour Congress donated close to \$10,000, it influenced your policy. They simply supported you.

The Canadian Media Producers Association; Bombardier Canada, \$2,300. I'm sure that had no influence on your policy. Borealis Infrastructure Management Inc., \$9,975. Box Grove Hill Developments, almost \$10,000. Bruce Power, \$9,975. Central 1 Credit Union, \$9,313. CUPE National Office—all of these.

The point I'm making is that the opposition suggested that somehow that has an influence on the government, on government contracts and so on. I don't accuse the opposition of asking questions because they happen to get a donation from another party. I think that would be inappropriate. Even though that did happen in Great

Britain, I don't think it happens here. I would never accuse them of that.

The Egg Farmers of Ontario, \$7,000 to the NDP. The Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, \$9,313; 407 ETR Concession Co., \$2,300.

1740

Now, my good friend—I have the greatest respect for the integrity of my friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. I see here a donation from ACTRA Toronto performers of \$2,300. If I wanted to be mischievous, I'd say that that had something to do with the bill. It didn't; he's a man of integrity. That does not affect whether he's going to bring forward a bill or ask questions in that regard—not at all. But that is, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, what they are suggesting.

Cisco Systems, \$2,300; CIBC head office, \$4,656; and Coach Canada—the point I'm making is that they have their fundraising operations that take place, and they have their individual fundraisers. When they were in the majority in this Legislature—remember, they could either stop legislation or, in some cases, through private members' bills, initiate legislation—I did not get up in this House, nor did Adrian Morrow write about the fact that you're getting all kinds of money in your fundraisers. You had the opportunity to stop legislation. Now, did I say that you're stopping legislation because you're getting donations from these people? I did not.

The leader of the party raised \$1.5 million during his leadership campaign, and I did not get up in this House at the time and say that, for instance, Ontario Incorporated 2407553, which donated \$25,000, had any influence on Conservative policy. I did not say that, but that is the implication of this resolution and the speakers on the opposite side. Or that the Barrie Colts junior hockey team, which donated \$5,000 to the leader of the party—by the way, he was down in Las Vegas at the fantasy camp; it cost \$15,000. That has nothing to do with this, though, so I'll leave that alone. It has nothing to do with the Barrie Colts.

The point I'm making is, there's a word that starts with an "H"—it's unparliamentary—that I can't use, and that's when somebody says, "You shouldn't do this, but we're allowed to do that." So I'm not condemning you. I'm not accusing you. All I'm asking is that you give the same consideration to those on this side of the House, because it's been explained, very clearly, that all these contracts are done totally independent of any political influence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: In this debate, what really matters to the people at home, Speaker, is that a lot of people at home can't pay their hydro bills. When they hear that contracts are given and then taken away and then there's police investigations—not one, not two, but five—people at home think, "Well, if police are investigating me, something happened. But in this case, it doesn't seem like anything is happening." And each time they hear more, and it costs more.

Then they heard, during the election, that this Premier was going to be the most open and transparent there was, and they believed that. But nothing has changed. Some of the members say, "This is a totally new regime," but the Premier was a minister in the regime. She actually signed some of those documents. So nothing has changed.

If the government would like to clear the air, the best way to clear the air would be to have a simple, open and transparent investigation of what went wrong with these contracts, because, Speaker, for people at home, when the taxman comes calling, the people at home can't say, "Well, I'm sorry, but I deleted records and I'm going to take a course in how not to do it next time." That doesn't work for the people at home, and it shouldn't work for the government either.

We have to look into how that happened. The people at home have no confidence that that does not continue to happen now. That's why we need to support this motion and why the government needs to institute an investigation on why these things are happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I have been following this debate on and off this afternoon, but let me tell you a little story.

I dropped by the East City Coffee Shop in Peterborough last Friday. Of course, anybody that knows Peterborough—it's on Hunter Street East. A great deal: For five bucks, you get a western sandwich and a cup of coffee. It's really quite fabulous.

But, you know, all my good friends, as I was eating my lunch, came up to me and said, "We want to know about Cornerstone."

I said, "Cornerstone? Well, that's kind of an interesting topic."

They said, "Yes, we read it in the Toronto Star. We read about shares A and shares B and shares C and who owns shares A and who was voting on shares C."

So I said, "Look, this is more secretive than the Panama Papers. I could look at the Panama Papers and get more information on the Panama Papers than I could about Cornerstone."

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Hon. Jeff Leal: So I said to my good friends in the East City Coffee Shop who wanted to get more information from me, "Look, the only way we could probably shed more light on Cornerstone is perhaps if we sent it to a legislative committee. We could call some witnesses, and then we could really find what's going on at Cornerstone."

Interjection: A public inquiry.

Hon. Jeff Leal: A public inquiry—and then, Mr. Speaker, I look at my good friends opposite. I just happen to have this list here: We have things like 1077867 Ontario. I don't know who that is. Then we have—

Hon. James J. Bradley: How much?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, they were—

Interjection.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, now, Mr. Speaker, I said to my good friend from St. Catharines that that company was in for \$10,000. Who the devil is Ontario 1021862?

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of comments this afternoon about transparency, but I've always believed you've got to walk the talk. If you want to have more transparency, let's investigate Cornerstone and let's investigate all these different companies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M. Michael Mantha: C'est extrêmement désolant quand tu te lèves debout, que tu écoutes les commentaires qui sont donnés, puis, quand tu regardes les gens, ils sont en train de parler à la caméra qui est en arrière à la place de parler aux Ontariens. C'est ça qui est désolant.

Quand je vais prendre un café avec les aînés de mes communautés, les gens le savent, ça. Parce que tu t'assois avec eux autres, tu leur parles et ils te demandent : Comment est-ce que ça se fait que vous répondiez ou que vous agissiez d'une telle façon? Pourquoi n'êtes-vous pas capables de répondre à nos questions et aux besoins qu'on a à travers la province? Pourquoi n'êtes-vous pas capables de nous prendre au sérieux, d'écouter nos besoins et puis d'en discuter?

Pourquoi? La réponse est bien simple : parce que ce fameux outil-là que j'ai en arrière de moi, c'est une caméra. Puis les gens se comportent d'une telle façon en parlant aux caméras, et ne parlent pas des nécessités et des « concernes » que les gens ont dans ma circonscription. C'est ça qui est le problème, monsieur le Président.

Quand tu regardes les scandales dont le gouvernement est en train de passer au travers, ils ne sont vraiment pas en train de répondre aux questions nécessaires. Les gens ont besoin de réponses pour donner une franche opinion du gouvernement qui se passe présentement. Ils sont en train de regarder ce qui est en train de se passer ici, et puis ils sont complètement en gros dégueulasse. C'est ça qui se passe, monsieur le Président. C'est la franche vérité de ce qui se passe.

Continuer à parler. Continuer à crier. Vous êtes en train de sécuriser le besoin de—ce que les gens sont en train de demander dans cette province, c'est une honnêteté de leur gouvernement.

Vous avez la chance, sous la motion aujourd'hui, d'apporter cette honnêteté-là. Nettoyez vos tiroirs. Nettoyez vos idées, et puis donnez-leur les réponses dont ils ont besoin.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M. Gilles Bisson: Je suis complètement d'accord avec les commentaires que mon collègue d'Algoma-Manitoulin vient juste de faire.

Écoute, avec ce gouvernement, ce n'est pas une enquête de la PPO; ce n'est pas deux enquêtes; ce n'est pas trois enquêtes; ce n'est pas quatre enquêtes. C'est cinq enquêtes.

À quel point est-ce que le gouvernement va dire : « OK, c'est assez. On a besoin de tirer au clair ce qui se passe. »

Ce que le député est en train de dire c'est que le gouvernement a une chance, avec cette motion, de mettre au clair et de mettre en vue de tout le monde exactement ce qui se passe.

1750

Ma chef a dit, une couple de minutes passées, quand elle a fait son discours, que si vous n'avez rien à cacher, votez pour la motion. C'est bien simple. Mais non, ce gouvernement dit : « Non, on aimerait mieux être capable d'utiliser notre majorité pour nier une enquête publique sur quelque chose qui est de base quand ça vient à l'honnêteté sur ce que le gouvernement fait ou ne fait pas. »

Moi, je supporte cette motion parce que je pense que c'est important que le public ait la chance de tirer au clair exactement ce qui se passe. Ce gouvernement-là doit être capable d'accepter les conséquences de leurs actions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to use these last few minutes to take my right of reply.

I have to say that I was quite interested in the discussion on this motion. There are some unassailable facts that are true here in the province of Ontario these days, and I think it's important that everyone in this chamber acknowledges it. We have an unprecedented situation when it comes to the way the government has been fundraising. We have a situation where it's being reported in the newspaper, so it's not just the opposition that's upset with this, it's not just the people at home.

When I go home, I certainly hear about it. I'm sure other MPPs, regardless of which side of the House they're on, hear about it. There is a real problem here. One of the speakers on the government side talked about the fact that he thinks that it's all about protecting democracy, that we should be more protective of democracy. I think it was the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change that talked about that with a straight face. That's what this motion is all about: It's about trying to protect our democracy from the kinds of implications that have been raised around the way that the government has sold access to people who have interests in the energy file. But that's only one part of it. The pay-for-access fundraisers that the Liberal government has had with the finance minister and with the Premier and with the Minister of Energy—this is something that was reported in the papers, Speaker. We're not making it up.

The fact that we have the same people that benefited from the sale of Hydro One also belying up to big fundraisers with the governing party—that's problematic; that's very worrisome. At the same time, we have five OPP investigations into the actions of this government, particularly a number of them when it comes to the energy file. We have just found that there's a number of lawsuits that are under way because of the way that the

government dealt with information around the energy file.

This motion speaks particularly to the way that this Liberal government has handled the energy file. We know that we've had a sell-off of Hydro One without the permission of the people who own it, 80% of whom do not want to see Hydro One sold off. We also see, of course, as I've mentioned, the lucrative fundraising that was done by the Liberals in the wake of that decision, in the wake of the IPO, when all of those stakeholders happened to be able to have big, deep pockets where they funded the Liberal Party.

We know that Ontarians need, want and deserve affordable, clean energy in this province, but instead, that's not what's happening. It seems like every decision that this Liberal government has made when it comes to the energy file is more about doing better or improving the coffers of the Liberal Party as opposed to doing what's right for the people of Ontario.

It's a very, very worrisome situation, Speaker. It is a situation that begs some scrutiny. When this same kind of situation was occurring in Quebec, where there was a Liberal Premier at the time, a Liberal government, and the accusations and the worry were swirling, and people were concerned, and the media stories were damning, that Premier had the courage of his convictions and actually called a commission of inquiry into scandalous reports about what was happening in the construction industry in his province. And guess what? The Charbonneau commission looked at the situation and, lo and behold, where the smoke was seen, the fire became apparent as a result of that work.

The people of Ontario deserve no less than what the people of Quebec got. We deserve no less in this province than having an independent commission of inquiry look into what this Liberal government has been doing in the energy file. Whether that is the deletion of documents, whether that is the selling off of a utility and then making lucrative dollars or fundraising in a lucrative way from those very same stakeholders, whether it is OPP investigations, the bottom line is this: The people of Ontario deserve to know what's really going on here. The newspaper articles have been frightening.

I do say, I was surprised to hear a number of the members on the government bench try to muddy the waters and pretend that somehow this debate is about anything else than what it is, and that is about this Liberal government's decisions and who benefited from this Liberal government's decisions when it comes to the decisions they've made on the energy file. I think every Ontarian would agree that the only people who are benefiting, apparently, are the Liberal Party of Ontario. The people of Ontario deserve to be disabused of that suggestion.

Call the public inquiry. Clear the air. Do the right thing. Be open and transparent and give the people of Ontario the answers they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a maximum 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1756 to 1806.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask all members to take their seats, please.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Hillier, Randy	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	Horwath, Andrea	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Hudak, Tim	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	Jones, Sylvia	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Vanhof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Gates, Wayne	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Oraziotti, David
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Malhi, Harinder	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Martins, Cristina	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Thibeault, Glenn
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 50.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Ajax-Pickering on a point of order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Just on a point of order: I'd like to mention that the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario is staying extra time because it was delayed here today. They're still there till 7 o'clock, and they welcome you all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

CONDUITE D'UN DÉPUTÉ

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the Premier or her parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes to reply.

The member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I stood up late last week to ask the Premier about the conduct of her Minister of Energy, the last thing I expected to hear was an excuse.

You'll remember that earlier in the week, our leader, Andrea Horwath, asked a question about energy policy, the awarding of contracts by this government and police investigations into the awarding of those contracts. This was a legitimate question that the Minister of Energy chose to respond to with dismissive, casual sexism.

Why was the question legitimate? Recently, it was revealed in the pages of the Ottawa Citizen that the OPP is investigating the destruction of documents related to a \$500-million lawsuit by Trillium Power Wind Corp. over cancelled offshore projects.

Now, this isn't the first investigation by the OPP into this government; it's the fifth. This isn't even the first OPP investigation into this government on the awarding of energy contracts; it's the second. Speaker, that's only the start of the concerns that Ontarians have with this government's so-called energy policy. Every day, we find out some new detail about how thoroughly this government has mismanaged the energy file.

Given all of that, our leader asked the question, "Will this Premier do the right thing by the people of this province and call a commission of inquiry?" By now, everyone is familiar with how the minister chose to respond, and I think that's an important point to make. The minister made a choice to respond in a manner of casual sexism, dismissing our leader's question. Rather than answer the question, he decided to demean the member.

This is part of a pattern, Mr. Speaker. In 2011, to MPP McKenna, he told her to do "her big-girl job." In 2014, he said to the Auditor General that the energy file was too complex for her. Later that day, he said to our leader, "I won't take lessons from that woman." I asked him about that comment. In response, he said that he was not being sexist because he has daughters.

I received a letter later that day from a constituent who said:

"I saw your exchange with the Minister of Energy yesterday and wanted to share my thoughts with you as someone who hopes to never have my competence or intellect questioned on the basis of my gender...."

"I found it absolutely deplorable that the" Minister of Energy "thinks he can equate his daughters with the

Auditor General simply because they have being female in common. He would never compare a male AG's report to dinner conversation with his daughters if this kind of 'minor professional disagreement' developed, so the presumption that his daughters have a comparable or equal amount of insight into the issues at hand simply because they are women is horrifying to say the least. In my opinion, it's worse than his original insinuation that the situation is too complex for a woman to properly understand.

"Basically, what he is saying is that having an MBA, a highly coveted accounting designation that is difficult to obtain, and decades of experience in a ... male-dominated industry amounts to the same thing as being someone's daughter."

Valerie goes on to say, "I hope you won't let those kinds of remarks go unchecked. For the men and women of this province who believe intelligence is located in people's heads rather than their pants, it needs to be said."

"Thank you for your time; keep fighting the good fight."

This is about challenging a behaviour in this House, Mr. Speaker, and it needs to be challenged, because there's a level of hypocrisy we are seeing from that side of the House.

To get back to my original—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Withdraw.

This behaviour needs to be challenged. In fact, when the Premier defended the Minister of Energy, she said that he apologized; in fact, he did not. What the minister said is, "If my pronunciation was unclear and it appeared ... I said something I did not"—he did not own up for his behaviour, Mr. Speaker.

But what is clear is that what the minister offered is a non-apology. This much is true: The Minister of Energy, in this chamber, used sexist language to dismiss a legitimate question on public policy from the leader of Ontario's NDP. I know Ontarians expect far, far better from this Premier. As she herself has said, sexism and harassment are never okay. Well, if they are never okay, why is she allowing her minister to continue on in his job, having never shown any remorse for his repeated public behaviour?

Premier Wynne used to talk about working from the activist centre. What does that phrase even mean anymore? By allowing such conduct to continue unchecked—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Please stop the clock. Look, because of the sensitivity of this particular question that is being brought forth, I would ask that all members would demonstrate professionalism, listen attentively and allow the question to be asked so that a reply can then be given. Please. Thank you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Premier Wynne used to talk about working from an activist centre. What does that phrase even mean anymore? By allowing such conduct to

continue unchecked, the Premier has thrown out any pretense of activism or leadership. If it really is never okay, then fire the Minister of Energy and prove it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Please be seated. The Premier now has up to five minutes to reply.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sexual harassment is not a partisan issue, and I really don't think that it should be turned into one. This is a case of the minister stumbling over some words, something we have all done in this House, every one of us. I don't believe there was any malice behind it. I suspect that, despite the attempt to score political points, deep down the member opposite knows that as well.

The member opposite also knows that the minister came into the House the same day to apologize and clarify his remarks. The minister explained what happened, and then he came into the House to apologize. He made it clear that offensive language has no place in this Legislature.

Le ministre a expliqué ce qui s'est passé et a clairement indiqué que les remarques offensantes n'ont pas leur place à l'Assemblée législative.

That was the right thing to do, and I'm very glad that he took that step.

But since the member wants to talk about sexual harassment, I'd like to take this opportunity to tell her and the House what our government has been doing on this issue, because this is a much broader issue. The issue of sexual harassment, which the member opposite has raised, is a much larger issue.

I've been clear that sexual harassment in the workplace is not a partisan issue. It's a societal problem that, unfortunately, remains in workplaces across Ontario. It's an issue that I take seriously and an issue on which our government has taken significant action.

When I have been faced with the issue of sexual harassment, I have led by example, and I will continue to do so. Any instance that is brought to my attention is handled in accordance with the Liberal caucus workplace discrimination and harassment policy. That policy recognizes how hard it can be for someone to step forward.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'm broadening this issue, because we can't, in isolation, talk about these things; we have to talk about them in the broader societal context. Because of that, our policy says that "individuals making a complaint of discrimination or harassment are assured that during investigation and consideration of a complaint, and following its resolution, all information relating to the complaint will remain confidential." If I receive a complaint, we take it very seriously. We undertake an investigation led by an external independent investigator. This includes giving the caucus member the opportunity to respond. When we receive the investigator's report, we take action commensurate with the findings.

Now, I'm going to refer to the issue surrounding the member for Niagara Falls, because as I say, I'm talking about the broader issue. My action in regard to that member is an example of how I deal with these issues

within my own caucus. I've also demonstrated ongoing leadership throughout our government's sexual violence and harassment action plan. Through our sexual violence and harassment action plan, we are investing \$41 million over the next three years. This includes launching our advertising campaign, which has tangibly improved attitudes and has been viewed over 84 million times.

I'm proud that our government has introduced legislation to strengthen provisions related to sexual violence and harassment in the workplace, on campus, in housing and through the civil claims process, and I'm glad that what we are doing has prompted a conversation that is broader than within this Legislature. This is a conversation that has to happen across society. I believe it is important and that we must continue to make sure we're protecting Ontarians and creating a safe environment in which to live and work.

We've also increased funding for all 42 sexual assault centres by \$1.75 million and increased funding for hospital-based sexual assault and domestic violence treatment centres by \$1.1 million.

The member opposite should know that sexual harassment is not an issue that I shy away from as Premier. Instead, it's an issue that I have dealt with head-on. I believe it is my responsibility to take action when required. It's my responsibility to respect issues of confidentiality, and it's also my responsibility to create an environment where people do feel safe to come forward. If we can create an environment where people feel safe to come forward, where they know that they are going to be treated appropriately, then they will come forward. Then, I believe, the culture can start to change.

That's why I wrote to the Speaker a few weeks ago about this issue. I'm aware that the leader of the third party has told media that the NDP also has anti-harassment policies, so it's my hope, given the question of this member, that the member opposite and her party will work with us to bring in a code to cover the conduct of MPPs from all three parties. I think that would be appropriate, because this is not an issue that is isolated to one party or another.

Situations like these are sensitive, and we owe it to those who have come forward with an expectation of confidentiality not to provide further details. The survivors in any situation like this deserve to be treated with respect. The opposition parties should be respectful of survivors and not play politics with their experience.

I know that the member opposite was talking about a particular situation for which the minister has apologized. I have chosen to put that conversation in the context of the broader issue around sexual assault and violence—and that we deal with harassment issues together; we find a way to come up with a code that all parties can agree to. I hope that the opposition parties will work with us on that. We've put forward our code as an example.

I look forward to this ongoing discussion. It's important to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1823.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
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Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
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Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Wednesday 11 May 2016

Mercredi 11 mai 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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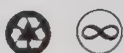
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 11 May 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 11 mai 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, given that today is the birthday of the member from Ottawa–Orléans, I ask that you please give her a day off.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Happy birthday.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now get to work.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ALTERNATIVE FINANCIAL SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT LES SERVICES FINANCIERS DE RECHANGE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 5, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to financial services / Projet de loi 156, Loi modifiant diverses lois concernant les services financiers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated this bill, the member from London–Fanshawe had the floor. The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my privilege to rise on behalf of my constituents of London–Fanshawe to once again speak on Bill 156 and address the threat posed by targeted predatory lending practices. Deep cycles of debt threaten solvency, standards of living and social stability within vulnerable communities, and lending practices that allow these cycles to continue need to be addressed immediately.

Not only does Bill 156 fail to address certain concerns that it should address—concerns that have been around for years now—it actually has the potential to allow for some abuses to slip under the radar. In particular, some of the amendments imposed by Bill 156 on the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act appear to reduce government regulation over certain individuals and institutions. Bill 156 redefines the term “collection agencies” to include persons who purchase debts in arrears and collect them, but this broad definition will not likely have

any significant impact, as it merely captures entities already traditionally thought of as collection agencies.

Further to the limited effectiveness of this provision, the bill introduces new exemptions under this act. The amendment weakens oversight on businesses that are not primarily engaged in debt collection but nonetheless do engage in debt collection. This creates space for these companies to ignore regulations with a drastically reduced risk of facing any kind of consequences.

While claiming to broaden the scope of this act, the bill in fact diminishes it. Bill 156 removes the requirement that a person who acts as a collector must be registered by the registrar, placing the onus instead on the associated collection agencies to ensure that the collector complies with the act and its regulations.

The bill also removes the requirement that collectors must be registered under the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act before a collection agency employs or authorizes them to act on its behalf.

These appear to be missteps, reducing government regulations and accountability measures in an industry that requires more oversight, not less.

The way in which debts are collected, especially from people who, quite frankly, are already in vulnerable situations, is very important to the well-being of people, and should be a concern for this government. Legislation intended, at least in theory, to reduce the harm caused by predatory lending practices should certainly not widen the margin for potential abuses. The reductions in oversight and accountability brought on by amendments to the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act appear to do just that.

Ontario's New Democrats generally support action that provides consumers with real protection and relief, but Bill 156 does not deliver any real action. While this bill is a good sign that the government has finally recognized some of these important issues, it is simply a framework without any concrete amendments. This government began its review process back in 2013, but, as of now, Ontarians will still have to wait until 2017 to see if any action is actually taken.

We did have some wonderful suggestions from our critic that weren't taken into this bill, except one. Those recommendations—the other three recommendations I spoke about earlier in my debate—would certainly have improved protections for consumers, and this government ignored them.

I just want to conclude by thanking the Speaker for allowing me the time to debate this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill once again and to respond to the member from London-Fanshawe.

The government is trying to protect consumers through this bill, and that includes protecting Ontarians from a cycle of debt. I think that's very important. This bill is an important step in addressing the needs of consumers who are in need of alternative financial services.

The last time I spoke about this bill, I mentioned, for example, that in my riding there are payday lenders that are opening up more and more frequently. They try to take advantage of people who are most disadvantaged in life, and I think it's very important that we try, through this bill, to protect consumers with a review of the maximum total cost of borrowing for payday loans. We need to work with stakeholders and with communities to come up with various solutions.

For example, in my area, the local councillor has put forward a motion at city hall, which passed unanimously, trying to determine a certain distance between payday lenders, because there are too many in certain areas and they're always concentrating in the same neighbourhoods. We're working together with ACORN, who hosted a fair banking forum in my riding. That is very important. We also heard from the postal workers' union, which is trying to re-establish the return of postal banking. That's very important.

There are various solutions that we have to find, but the aim and focus is to protect consumers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for London-Fanshawe. She points out many key failures in this bill. I look at, really, the underlying issues. The payday system is a system that people like to shoot stones at, I guess, but I think we should look at whether this bill is doing anything to help the system out. Are we doing anything to reduce the number of people who have to rely on the system? We don't see that in the bill. We could be working with the banks, certainly, to make low-cost bank accounts more readily available. We're not seeing that.

0910

We have a government here that has driven up the percentage of residents who are at minimum wage to the highest in the country. Ontario has always been the province of prosperity, but we're not seeing that anymore, and the policies in this bill really don't do anything for it. Yes, they try to make it harder for people to be able to access payday loans, but are they really doing that? You can cross the street, if you're in Toronto, or go down two buildings, in some cases—sometimes next door—and get another loan. There's really nothing in here. It's put out there to look good.

But really, should we not be looking at the reasons why people are using these loans, and helping them out? There's nothing better than a good job. We're not seeing

any policies here that are encouraging or helping with employment and helping with the level of salaries. You can increase the minimum wage, but you're not really doing anything. What we need is more competition for employment in this province. Thank you, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Can we keep it down over there?

The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you. Again, it's always a pleasure and a privilege getting up and spreading the voice of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

I think that our critic the member from London-Fanshawe highlighted some very big concerns about this bill. Our critic was quite eloquent in regard to the proposed framework actually being a step in the right direction. It's a good sign that the government is actually finally acknowledging that there is a problem, and a recognition that individuals across this province are just barely keeping their heads above water when it comes to financial situations. What we really do need is some real consumer protection and relief for those consumers.

Some of the amendments in Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016, exempt businesses that are not primarily engaged in debt collection from the act. This weakens oversight, Mr. Speaker. It weakens it on behalf of the companies. Another amendment removes the collector licensing regime. Instead, the onus is placed on the associated collection agency to ensure that the collector complies with the act and its regulations. It also introduces an administrative monetary penalty regime for those who contravene this act, the details of which are still going to be determined under regulations. Then it allows the minister to make regulations under the information that "a collection agency or collector is required to provide ... when attempting to collect payment ... from the debtor." This provision doesn't require the minister to act.

Essentially what we have is that nothing within this bill is bad, but there is really a lack of substance in this bill as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Beaches-East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It is a great pleasure to have a chance to comment on the remarks on this bill by the member from London-Fanshawe and critic on this issue for the third party. I appreciate very much that we hear from the critic. There is support for the direction the bill is going—the bill recognizing that there is a problem. I would take from her almost end remarks about how there is so little in the bill—I know that she recognizes this is a framework bill. It's a bill that sets in motion the opportunity that through the consultation process and through regulations, we will have the flexibility to address the concerns, and changing concerns, of consumers, particularly those consumers who rely far too frequently on payday loans.

We know this comes as a great hardship. The cost associated with a payday loan, sometimes \$21 on a \$100 loan—we understand how usurious that is. But, when people are faced with a question of whether they can eat or feed their family before their cheque clears their bank, we appreciate that they have these pressures in their lives, and we want very much to be able to regulate this in a way that would be far fairer and protect people from using this all too frequently and all too often.

What I'm hearing from the member of the third party is that we want to move this forward; we want to get this in to committee. If there are some amendments and changes to the framework agreement that would allow us to have the flexibility through regulations, we need to have that and hear from people at the committee stage. I would note that, at this stage, we've probably had over 11 hours of debate on this particular second reading, so maybe it is time that we get this bill to committee and allow other people—those who are using the service and those who are providing the service—to come before committee and give us a better sense of where they think we are with this bill. If we need to make some small changes, at least we can now start developing the regulations to move forward with it. Speaker, I do hope we'll have widespread agreement to move forward on this as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London—Fanshawe has two minutes.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: You know, this bill didn't address reforms actually proposed in a consultation paper in 2015. The bill doesn't introduce new requirements regarding money transfers, which was extremely important. It doesn't address a new licensing regime. It doesn't address price caps or uniform disclosure requirements affecting alternative financial services as a whole. Those were some very important things that came out of the consultation paper.

I understand the parliamentary assistant's explanation: Yes, the bill is a framework, as I mentioned; some regs are going to be determined to help with the flexibility of the bill. But there were some very poignant recommendations that could have been addressed already in the bill, which were extremely important to consumers. As I mentioned, our critic talked about those, and only one of those recommendations, extending the grace period when a loan could be repaid, was implemented. So that's one item in there that we can say is hopeful.

We also suggested capping lending fees. We asked for a \$15 lending fee cap on \$100 borrowed. That's still an extremely high interest rate. That wasn't considered. We asked, of course, for the creation of a database to enforce the ban on rollover loans, Speaker, because you know that if you roll over a loan onto another loan, it just becomes a money pit, and you can never escape that. People get into these precarious financial situations, and it's an awful scenario. That would have been a very important one as well.

I understand that, yes, when there are some contributions and presentations, things will change, but it is dis-

appointing to see some things that were really important to consumers left out of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on Bill 156, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to financial services; in other words, a bill dealing with regulating the payday loan sector or industry. This is an issue that has been of big concern to me, on behalf of my community and my constituents of Ottawa Centre. I've had the opportunity to speak about this type of practice for some time, and was very glad, some years ago, when the government brought forward the Payday Loans Act to start regulating this particular sector and start putting caps around the kind of interest that could be charged.

I think that many of you have been to my community of Ottawa Centre, given that it's a downtown community and, of course, invites and welcomes people at all times in various capacities, personally and professionally. If you're aware of my community and have been in some of the key areas in my community, such as Bank Street right downtown, running from Wellington Street, where Parliament Hill is located, all the way, I would say, to the Queensway going south—

Mr. Todd Smith: Beautiful city.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Beautiful city. Thank you to the member from Hastings for recognizing how beautiful my community is.

If you look at Bank Street, right from Wellington to the Queensway, and look at the businesses, it's a beautiful main street with a lot of small businesses—all kinds of businesses. It continues to transform, Speaker, but one of the things that will strike you is the enormously large number of payday loan types of businesses that are located on that stretch of Bank Street. I'm surprised and shocked every single time I walk down Bank Street in my riding.

Similarly, if you look at Bronson Avenue, which is parallel, just west of Bank Street, it's a little less a business type of street, but nonetheless, there are a lot of businesses. Mostly, you'll find small convenience stores, small shawarma stores and other takeout places. But what you're starting to see more and more, again, is payday loan types of businesses.

0920

Then there are other parts of my riding, such as Bank Street in the Glebe, where you will hardly see a payday loan type of store, or Richmond Road in Westboro, where I don't think a single payday loan storefront or business exists.

So you wonder why—and I have asked this question—certain areas, certain neighbourhoods in my riding, have more of these businesses than not. What it really comes down to, Speaker, is the kind of income background, if I can say that, of people who live in those areas. If you look around Bank Street the way I'm describing it to you, from Wellington to the Queensway, you will notice on that stretch of Bank Street—it's right

in the downtown core, and you've got mostly multi-unit residential buildings, fairly tall buildings. You've got a lot of Ottawa community housing—social and affordable housing—within those areas. You have a fair bit of what I would say is a transitory population in that area. Similarly, around Bronson, you will see a lot of low-income housing in those types of neighbourhoods: very vibrant neighbourhoods, very vibrant communities—a lot of community activity goes on—but there is an income threshold.

That's where you are seeing these businesses getting set up and being located, because they're targeting certain kinds of people. They're not targeting people living in the Glebe, who have far higher incomes. They're not targeting people living in Westboro, in my community of Ottawa Centre, where people have higher incomes; they're middle-class and above. They are setting themselves up where people with certain financial challenges may live.

That, to me, is something predatory in nature and something we must address. That's why I'm quite happy to see Bill 156 and the kind of restrictions and regulations it's putting in, in order to protect the consumer—in order to protect my constituents who have no option but to use those types of services—to ensure that they have other options available, and if they are going to use these businesses, they can do so in a manner that protects them.

Speaker, as has been said before, Bill 156 amends three pieces of legislation. It amends the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act, it amends the Consumer Protection Act and it amends the Payday Loans Act.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Continue.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: What this proposed legislation does is strengthen consumer protection in the area of payday lending and other alternative financial services and debt collection by protecting consumers who borrow from payday lenders, protecting consumers from unexpected costs of alternative financial services and protecting consumers with debt collector rules that apply broadly.

Speaker, the proposed bill would also protect consumers in several important ways, and I think that is an important facet of this bill. Consumers with debts in collection would benefit from debt collection rules that apply more broadly, including applying them to debt purchasers. Consumers cashing government cheques at alternative financial service providers would have more information and may benefit from a cap on the rate of cheque-cashing services. I think that's a very important feature in this bill. And consumers using rent-to-own services would benefit from a grace period for late payment and a right to reinstate the agreement under certain circumstances.

In addition, Speaker, the bill ensures that consumers using instalment loans would benefit from cost control of certain fees, such as optional insurance, and consumers of payday loans would have to wait a grace period between payday loans, giving them more time to consider

their options. Also, those who borrow repeatedly would have a longer repayment period in certain circumstances.

I mentioned that the bill also amends the Payday Loans Act by requiring payday lenders to take into account certain factors about a borrower before entering into a payday loan agreement by restricting high-frequency borrowing, and by improving payday loan borrower awareness of credit counselling services.

Further, I mentioned that it amends the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act to:

- expand debtor protections by broadening the category of debts to which the debt collection rules apply, including applying them to certain debt purchasers;

- reduce the regulatory burden on collection agencies by eliminating the requirement to register individual collectors while maintaining the agencies' accountability for the conduct of their collectors;

- provide authority to refine the application of exemptions through regulations;

- provide more authority to govern the information to be disclosed to debtors in the collection process; and

- enable administrative monetary penalties under the act.

There is a lot in this bill, and rightly so. This bill is the result of extensive consultations. My community of Ottawa Centre was part of those consultations. I have city councillors like Mathieu Fleury who have been active advocates on this particular file. My understanding is that councillors like himself and others on Ottawa city council are very supportive of these changes for exactly the reason I was talking about: the level of concentration that we are seeing of payday loan businesses that are developing in certain kinds of neighbourhoods. My riding, my community, being a downtown community, is definitely seeing that expanded role.

I would want to find better ways to encourage people to use credit unions and banks. I think an important question that we need to explore is how we can ensure that people who have limited financial means, who are working multiple jobs, who want to have access to the money they earn, instead of using these types of businesses like the payday loan companies, that charge enormous amounts of fees and interest etc., can actually use a credit union or a bank just like you and I do. I think that's the direction we want to go in.

I'm very emboldened by this piece of legislation. It's a step in the right direction, bringing significant protection for the consumers, and therefore I support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: A pleasure to respond to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on his speech today on Bill 156.

I listened to him talk about his beloved Bank Street in Ottawa. I know a lot of people in Ottawa. In fact, I lived there for four years. I wasn't forcibly asked to leave or anything like that.

But there were no payday loans on Bank Street back in the day when I was there, which was in the last part of

the 1970s. There were places where you could borrow money, but they were in the backroom of a building, and the interest rates were high and the consequences of not paying were serious.

However, to my point that I really want to make, and that is financial literacy, if we want to reduce the need or the occurrences of people going to a payday loan facility or institution, I say to the minister we need to start, in our school system, teaching the children today.

It has never been more complicated, financing. The costs of homes and everything else, and the acceptance of living with debt, have never been greater. I think what we need to do is make sure, for our children going through the school system, that we make it obligatory that they have some kind of financial literacy as part of our curriculum in school today. They need to be learning about that continuously through school, so that when they are out in the workforce, they will have made the kinds of choices that will make these decisions of going to a payday loan less likely in the circumstances they're in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are we—
Interjections.

Hon. Bill Mauro: All right. We've corrected the record, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I appreciate that. Are you finished yelling across the floor?

Hon. Bill Mauro: We were just having a conversation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, don't have one. You go through me. You can smile all you like, but that's the way it is.

Questions? The member from London—Fanshawe.
0930

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. You're being challenged today. It's kind of like this bill; it's a bit of a challenge as well. This Liberal government feels it's going to help consumers, and in some ways it will, but there are challenges to the bill, as you are challenging the Chair this morning. Some of those challenges in this bill are quite clear. In Bill 156, under the Collections and Debt Settlement Services Act, they actually appear to reduce government regulation over certain individuals and institutions.

Bill 156 redefines the term "collection agencies" to include "a person who purchases debts in arrears and collects them," but it doesn't broaden the definition and it likely won't have any impact. It's not really capturing that particular portion of oversight when it comes to those collection agencies and that, I think, is an important issue when you're talking about oversight and regulation of the agencies that lend money to people, as the minister said, in very vulnerable situations.

He mentioned that these payday loan agencies pop up in the neighbourhoods of people who are economically challenged. We don't dispute that—we certainly agree with it—but not just people with economic challenges

use payday loans. Many people find themselves struggling today. Seniors, for example: I know it's on the rise that they're using payday loans. Everyday life is becoming extremely unaffordable for seniors. They tell that to me all the time. They have struggles with hydro bills and they have struggles with medication. Lucky for us, we were able to put a pause—only—on the Ontario drug benefits for seniors. We'll be watching this government to find out if they're going to lift that pause after their consultations.

There is a problem with oversight in this bill with regards to those collection agencies, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Any comments?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm very glad, actually, to rise this morning and follow the conversation and debate from my colleague from Ottawa Centre, sharing a little bit about the status of some of our most vulnerable people in Ontario. But like we were saying, it's not only those individuals who are vulnerable. What we're trying to do is protect Ontarians and ensure that we have regulation, that we have the right approach towards how to deal with this new market emerging.

I was very happy when, on December 9, 2015, our government introduced Bill 156, and certainly, if passed, it will help protect Ontarians.

We were talking about financial literacy. Coming from a former business person—I owned a retirement residence at one point in my life—I certainly understand that not everyone has the same information. As legislators, it's important to educate. I'm happy to say that in our new curriculum we are introducing financial literacy because we realize how important it is that our young minds are educated. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, we do have to protect those who maybe did not benefit from the same advantages. That's why this bill is so important.

Some of you may also ask why we're not just banning them or stopping them. I was looking at some of the notes here, and actually, throughout the consultation process, community agencies and poverty advocates that we engaged with said that we shouldn't eliminate them.

I'm happy that this bill will be passing, hopefully.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you. It's a beautiful morning out there and I'm sure it's a lovely morning in downtown Ottawa as well today. The tulips are probably popping out of the ground and I'm sure the ice is finally gone on the Rideau Canal. It's going to be a beautiful summer in the nation's capital.

The member opposite, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and government House leader, was talking about the fact that these payday loan stores are popping up all around town, and he referred to that as being a predatory practice. I think the thing we have to remember is that these are businesses and they are legitimate businesses in Ontario right now. They're making the business case that if Bank Street is the best—

and maybe we should change the name of “Bank Street” to “Payday Loan Street” if they’re popping up all over the place, but the need is there in that part of the community. That’s why these businesses are locating there.

To call it predatory—I’m not exactly sure if that’s the way I would describe it. However, that’s where the people need these types of services, so that’s why they’re locating there. I can say the same thing about North Front Street in Belleville. I’ve seen different restaurants go out of business. The next thing you know, there’s a cash money store there, a payday loan store that’s locating. Wimpy’s was a great place to go for breakfast; now the only thing you can do there is cash your government cheque at the payday loan store.

But there is a need in these communities. As the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was talking about, I think we have to look at the root cause for this need and the fact that, obviously, people aren’t bringing home the same amount of money as they were—they’re paying more of that money to the government—or they don’t understand how to manage their finances properly. That’s why there’s the need for education when it comes to financial literacy. We have to be doing more in our elementary schools to teach financial literacy. They have to learn at an earlier age what it means to balance the books, to not go into deep, deep debt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The government House leader has two minutes.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the honourable members from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, London–Fanshawe, Ottawa–Orléans and Prince Edward–Hastings. I thank them for their thoughtful comments on the comments that I made earlier on. I don’t think I disagree with any of the comments that were made. They were all very enlightened comments.

I do to want clarify myself, to the comment that the member from Prince Edward–Hastings made. I wasn’t calling these businesses predatory, I was talking to some of the practices being predatory, and I think we all agree. That’s why there is a need for legislation.

I do wholeheartedly agree with the points made that were about financial literacy. I think a lot is being done in our education system, but more can be done, absolutely. That’s why we’re here. It’s a constant evolution, and things can be done better.

I think the conversation that all of us collectively need to engage in, and I really sincerely mean this—this conversation around payday loans and why this type of business or model exists, why it is thriving—is a conversation around why people are not able to use credit unions and banks as more legitimate financial services. You and I are able to use banks and credit unions at all times to meet our financial needs, whether it is to receive loans or a line of credit, or just to engage in normal transactions around cashing a cheque or depositing a cheque. Why is it that there is a certain population in our communities where that option is not available?

I think that’s a root cause that we need to engage in a broader, more holistic conversation around, because

ideally, what I would like to see is everybody, regardless of their means, being able to have access to a credit union or a bank and able to engage in those types of practices that are properly and well regulated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It’s a pleasure to join the debate here this morning on Bill 156. There’s been a lot of discussion already on this bill, and I understand the government’s need to bring in some legislation in this area, but from what I can tell from Bill 156 and my examination of it, the bill is more about micromanaging, actually, than creating a safer and more informed consumer environment when it comes to this sector.

This is a reaction to the fact that we’ve got some bad apples; there are some bad apples out there in this business, Mr. Speaker. Not all of them are bad apples, but you know what happens: You get a few bad apples, and suddenly the whole sector is painted with that same brush. There are some bad actors out there that have taken advantage of customers over the years, and we do feel the need for greater consumer protection. That’s an entirely reasonable impulse for us to have as legislators here.

However, examining the tone and tenor of some of the debate that we’ve had here in the Legislature, there seems to be a general misunderstanding on what this particular financial product does for people in Ontario. It’s not supposed to be a line of credit or a long-term loan.

0940

In his remarks earlier, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, who’s actually the critic for the third party—and to his credit, he has been a long advocate for reform in this sector; it’s something that he has been talking about virtually since he was elected here in 2011—has paid special attention to the loans themselves and the interest rates that are attached to some of these loans.

He drew the comparison, although it took him a while to speak to the legality of it—and the fact that 21% per \$100 over a two-week period, he then applied that to an entire year. It would be well over 500%. But these types of loans are short-term loans. They’re not meant to be mortgages. They’re not meant to be long-term loans. If we were talking about a 500% interest rate, it would be a reasonable point for him to make, but we’re actually talking about these loans intended to be over a timeline of a year or two years. Obviously, it would be outrageous. That’s not what’s happening in these loans.

The loans are designed to get people through until their next paycheck. The loans are designed to be a short-term financial product for customers with low or no credit, who can’t get a lower interest rate from a bank.

The minister was talking about the fact that, wouldn’t it be great if the banks and the credit unions were available to these types of customers? The banks don’t want to be a part of this business. That’s why we have the payday loans popping up. If this was something the banks wanted to get involved with, we would see them getting involved in it because they have the resources. They’ve

made a decision to stay out of this type of product, to stay out of these emergency loan situations.

There are some bad actors and that's why we need to regulate them and we need to regulate them strictly. We need to crack down on the abuses when they occur. We should do that. Some amendments to existing legislation are necessary. I actually do want to vote for some type of reform in this sector, as I think many people in the Legislature do.

It's really important to understand what these products actually are. The default rate on these loans is 10%. That's why the banks don't want to get involved in this. The default rate is 10%, which means these companies are in the business of providing loans to consumers who are more likely to default. Just like any other product, whether it's insurance or credit, the more likely you are to default or make a claim, the higher the cost of entry is going to be. Again, I just want to stress that the banks don't want to be in this business. We're never going to regulate this out of business and we never should regulate this out of business because it's obviously a service that's needed in our communities for a lot of different reasons.

What has happened over the last decade is that we've had a lot of people supplementing lower than expected wage growth with credit. When you have more and more people relying on credit like it's income instead of as a measure to improve equity, then you're going to increase the default rate. People who've experienced defaults and bankruptcies end up taking a hit on their credit score. When that happens, payday loans and the institutions that offer them become a last resort for these consumers.

I've met nobody who actually wants to sign up for a payday loan. They do it because they have to, because no other avenue is available to them other than maybe going to see the loan shark down the street. There are still loan sharks in business. Those loan sharks will have a bigger business if we put payday loan stores out of business.

We're also starting to see a lot of online payday loans and that's another situation.

So we have to put in strong regulation. We can't regulate these guys out of business. If we make the loans harder to achieve, these customers won't cease to exist, and no bank is getting into the business where it can afford to write off one loan in 10 at an annual interest rate of 21%.

It could be argued that the financial circumstances of these customers actually merit further protection. That's a reasonable point for us to make. I think we're all making that point. But if that regulation makes it harder for them to receive any loans at all, it doesn't actually help them. Their need doesn't go away. We need reform. I believe these customers need protection, and even that we need to raise industry standards to keep predatory and bad actors out of it.

I want to see amendments to this legislation. The problem with framework legislation—and we've seen a lot of framework legislation over the last while—is that it leaves too much to regulation. There's a lot of vagueness that's in a lot of the government bills when they deal with

a framework. It leaves too much to be decided in meetings that happen in a minister's office or in a bureaucrat's office. Too often, we've seen regulations that are drafted by these bureaucrats that, when they're implemented and they actually become the law of the land, have long-term consequences that were unanticipated by the ministry when the regulation was drafted in the first place or when the intent of the regulation was included in the framework.

In the financial services industry, we need legislation. We need prescribed rules. They need to be drafted and voted on here in the House or in committee, where we have members of the Legislature that are able to comment, and those who use these types of products and those who are in this business are able to comment, so that we actually have regulations that result in the type of legislation we need to govern this sector, which does have a number of bad apples in it.

We have to ensure that if these regulations are being drafted by a bureaucrat somewhere, or in a minister's office, they can't be arbitrarily changed. These have to be regulations that we're voting on in a committee, that we all understand what we're voting for and that they are going to have an impact in getting us to the end result that we want here.

The government may argue that needing to amend the legislation every time you want to increase enforcement in the industry is unnecessarily cumbersome, but it's clear that it's being done in other provinces in Canada to establish clear rules in the sector that ensure everyone knows what they're getting into when they either take out a payday loan or set up a business in the sector.

As I've said several times, we do need reform in this sector. These payday loan stores are popping up in our communities. Now, I'm told that the number of payday loan stores is actually decreasing across Ontario. That's not what I'm seeing, but I'm told that they are actually decreasing.

I can tell you that in Belleville, we recently had a sod-turning on a new casino in town. You'll remember when the government killed the horse racing industry in Ontario and they decided to put up a casino in every town? Well, Belleville is one of those cities that's getting a casino. It's been greeted mostly favourably by the municipality, but there is a lot of concern out there in the community as well because of the social impacts that a casino will have on our community. Let's face it, Belleville isn't exactly the Glebe, as the minister pointed out earlier. There are a lot of people struggling in Belleville to make ends meet, for a lot of different reasons, but it almost seems ironic that when the decision was made to open the casino, we saw some Cash Stores and payday loan stores opening up.

I'll have more to say in my two minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, it's a privilege to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin. I just want to let the people know who are viewing

this morning: I am the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and I'm not the member from Prince Edward-Hastings. We're often confused, one for the other. Today, I'm in the beige suit with the brown tie and he's wearing the blue suit with the purple tie. People have a hard time sometimes.

Mr. Todd Smith: Where's Waldo?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes.

There was a common theme in his comments that he was bringing up this morning. The common theme was that there are bad apples. There are bad apples that we need to deal with. I use the phrase the "white paint brush syndrome": Sometimes we paint the entire industry with one stroke of paint, judging everyone the same way. And he's right: There are some of these organizations that are out there looking out for individuals. There are some responsible individuals who are out there trying to make ends meet.

0950

But here's the reality: He talked about individuals using this service—and it is a service—as a line of credit and sometimes as a long-term loan. The reality is that people have to do that. At the end of the month, when payments are due, when your hydro bill comes in, when the rent is due, when you need food in your cupboards, you don't have that choice. You have to provide for your children. That's where some of these predatory organizations actually prey on individuals and attract them.

I come from an area where there are many seniors, and one of the biggest concerns that I have is their vulnerability and the easy access on the Internet, where individuals are now putting out what I refer to as a bait and switch: "Give us a call, and we'll help you out," but at the end of the day, you take the bait and you lose your funds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: And the minister for women's issues. Thank you.

Speaker, I'm pleased to speak for a couple of minutes to this bill. This consultation process started back in 2013, when I was the Minister of Consumer Services, so I'm very pleased to see Bill 156 moving forward. I think there has been a lot of discussion about what's coming forward and some amendments that are being proposed.

I do want to touch on the question that was asked when I was the minister responsible for this file and that keeps coming up: Why don't we just ban payday loans altogether? Some of the members have talked a bit about that this morning. Things that have been mentioned include the fact that these are legal and, I'd say, mostly legitimate businesses. However, the Consumer Protection Act has provisions to take action against any business that is violating that act, and this government has taken strong action against the, as people say, bad actors in this field.

In the consultation period, it's important to note that the majority of community agencies and poverty advocates we heard from did not support eliminating payday

lending in the absence of other short-term, small-dollar credit options. Consumers raised similar concerns. That really ties back to the earlier discussion about what space the banks and credit unions are in or not in. That's the feedback that has been obtained.

I think it is very important to know that consumers are protected under the Consumer Protection Act and that the government will continue to take strong action when needed. I look forward to the continued discussion about this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the Minister of Children and Youth Services and women's issues.

The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm pleased to add my thoughts to this debate.

We've heard here this morning that these payday loan places are popping up everywhere. I can tell you that in North Bay, my hometown, that is indeed the case. It's amazing that they're located where once-viable businesses were located. That's a big part of the story. The businesses are no longer there.

It's interesting; they're in some of the best locations of the city, and I've been asking the landlords in North Bay why. "Why would you want to attract that payday loan place into your corner building?" It's because it brings huge traffic to the rest of their building. They've become that popular. Why they've become that popular is because, as the member from Manitoulin mentioned, the payments are due, the bills come in, you need that money, and in many instances, a well-paying job is not to be had.

I think that's the sadder tale about what has happened in Ontario over the last decade. Because we have the highest energy rates in North America and we have the highest payroll taxes in Canada, as Sergio Marchionne, the CEO of Fiat Chrysler, told us, we've become the most expensive jurisdiction in Canada in which to do business. That's a very sad tale.

Last year, some 2,700 businesses closed in the province of Ontario. That's why we have these empty buildings, that's why the payday loan places have a place to go, and that's why they have the need in Ontario: because they have been let down by this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Toronto-Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and comment on the remarks made by the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

First, I have to say that clearly he's a good-looking member if he's mistaken for the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. It just goes without saying. I think he should take that credit right there and enjoy it.

The member talked about the problem of there being some bad apples in the payday loan system. Some have further alleged that members may look like apples in a particular lighting.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, just the bad part.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Just the bad part. But I don't think this is a question of a few bad apples. It's a business model for an industry that takes advantage of people who are financially desperate. To say that we should not be regulating these operations very tightly because there are "a few bad apples" completely misses the reality of these organizations.

My hope is that the bill that the Liberals have introduced will be substantially tightened in the debate and the committee work that's to come, because this bill doesn't address many of the significant reforms that actually are required, reforms that were raised in a paper put out in a 2015 consultation on this sector. The bill doesn't introduce any new requirements regarding money transfer services, clearly something that needs to be regulated. It doesn't introduce price caps, a new licensing regime or uniform disclosure requirements affecting alternative financial services as a whole.

I'll agree with the member from North Bay that there is a more profound problem of a dropping standard of living and lack of work. But this company preys on those who are dealing with that issue. It doesn't help them; it preys on them. They need to be tightly regulated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings has two minutes.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like to thank the very handsome member from Algoma—Manitoulin for his input, and also the minister and the member from Nipissing, who spoke on the need in our community to have some better policy other than this one to help grow the economy in Ontario again, and also the member from Toronto—Danforth for his comments this morning.

We've been talking a lot about apples. There are some legitimate apples out there, and those legitimate apples in the payday loan business want tighter regulation. They actually do want tighter regulation. They understand there is a need to get these bad apples out of the game. The only way we can do that is if we actually have regulation that we're talking about here in the Legislature when it comes to the bills so that we all know where we're headed with this piece of legislation.

This bill so far seems like it's more about micro-managing the sector than it is about bringing in a safer and more informed consumer environment for those who clearly need this type of service because of the reasons we've heard from the members who have spoken so far: because we do have the most expensive electricity in North America and our jobs are leaving at an incredible rate for other, lower-cost jurisdictions. There are people who are finding it more expensive to live in Liberal Ontario and they are leaving for other jurisdictions. That's why there's the need for these types of businesses out there. There's nowhere else for them to go. They don't have the job. The bills are coming in faster than they can imagine. Life is getting harder under these Liberals in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's my privilege to speak on behalf of the people of Hamilton Mountain in the House today as we debate Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act.

A few weeks ago, I had the great pleasure of meeting with Sally Palmer and the Ontario Association of Social Workers; Myrtle Greve of the Hamilton university women's club; Elizabeth McGuire, chair of the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits; Alana Baltzer of Hamilton Organizing for Poverty Elimination, or HOPE; and Rev. Carol Wood, chaplain of McMaster University.

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They came to my constituency office to talk about the increasing levels of poverty they were seeing and the depressingly inadequate levels of social assistance in Ontario. For example, they pointed out that the shelter allowance that is paid falls well below what it costs to rent an apartment—not the average apartment rent, just any apartment rent. We talked about the various challenges faced by people living in poverty, which go well beyond just having less money than most people.

One of those challenges, Speaker, is accessibility to affordable credit arrangements. That's the nature of the world that we live in. The people with the most money can access money that they don't have at a lower cost, while people with no money to spare pay the most to get access to money that they don't have.

One of those I met with, Alana, was one of the subjects of an article in the Hamilton Spectator a couple of weeks ago called "Putting a 'Human Face' on Poverty...." Here's her story as the Spec told it:

When she was a child, "she drank cough syrup because there was no food to be found at home. She left for school, where she collapsed." At school, they gave her food—cereal—and called the children's aid society.

She lived in poverty all of her life. "She was held back in school a few years and has a laundry list of disabilities including scoliosis, type 2 bipolar disorder and anxiety."

The high school diploma and the college community service worker diploma she holds, she says, are thanks to the support that she received from her teachers at high school and college. Still out of work, Alana wants to upgrade her education but needs the money to do that.

The constant struggle to find money made her fall into the trap of payday loans. She now "pays \$250 of her \$691 monthly disability cheque to service that debt." She has tough choices to make every day. Does she buy food? Does she pay the rent? Does she pay for laundry?

Here's how Alana closes her short story: "It's a struggle just to get through the day, but I like challenges." That's one strong woman, Speaker. I marvel at her ability to be positive in the face of such adversity.

Alana is just one example of people who get caught in the trap of payday loans, one of an estimated 16,000 Hamiltonians who borrow about \$15 million in payday loans every year. That's about an average of \$3,125 borrowed, and you can add that to the fees and interest associated with these loans.

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton along with the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction produced an excellent report last year on the prevalence and inequity in the payday loan business in my home city. I want to talk a little bit about what that report says.

First, they mentioned the deceptive advertising. Payday loan companies don't generally talk in terms of the percentage of interest you will pay; they are more likely to put a dollar figure to it. To use an example that was part of a study done by the Vancity credit union, they will say that a \$100 loan will cost you \$23. What the Vancity study found was that most people believed that a \$23 fee on a \$100 loan for two weeks means a 23% interest rate, similar to a credit card. In fact, the \$23 fee translates into a whopping 598% annual interest rate.

Tom Cooper of the poverty round table points out that a \$300 loan can accumulate up to \$1,638 in interest in the equalling year, and an interest rate of 546%.

The Criminal Code of Canada has set a criminal interest rate at 60%. It's a crime in Canada to charge more than 60% interest. How can that be, you ask, Speaker? Why aren't these people in jail? Quite simply, that part of the Criminal Code does not apply to payday loans in this province. So there's no Criminal Code legislation in Ontario today that covers the same as the Criminal Code of Canada. Yes, Ontario's Payday Loans Act companies circumvent the Criminal Code of Canada. It's hard to believe, but it's real.

In 1995, there were no payday loan outlets in Hamilton; now, there are 34. Interestingly, during the same time period, there has been a significant drop in the number of bank branches. It might come as no surprise, but it is important to point out that payday loan outlets are mostly located in low-income neighbourhoods. They know who their potential customers are. They know where to find the most desperate, who will pay over the odds for a loan just so they can put food on the table. That is not a society we should be living in: a society that allows companies to rip off those who can least afford it.

Repeatedly, it's the same people over and over and over again. It's a nasty cycle that drives people further and further into ever-deepening poverty. It's a phenomenon that's been around for as long as we've been using money. It's mostly been done in dark alleys, shady characters flanked by a couple of henchmen. Now we have it in broad daylight, with glowing neon signs offering reprieve from financial pressures, and those who are desperate will easily succumb, all in full sight and above the law. That's the Ontario we live in today.

The industry likes to present itself as a stopgap and an opportunity for people to get relief from a temporary difficult situation. But the Hamilton report talked about the nature of repeat customers for payday loan companies. For every new customer a payday loan company has, there are 15 repeat customers.

What is particularly disheartening is that this is not an accident. This is part of their business model. Ernst and Young did a study for the payday loan industry in which

they explained that their highest operating costs mean that it can only be profitable if they turn the vast majority of customers into repeat borrowers. Here's what Ernst and Young's study said: "Until a steady customer base is developed, these operators will be facing higher costs associated with signing up and processing first-time customers. Clearly, the long-run survival of a payday loan operator will depend on achieving a steady repeat customer business."

I want to move ahead to talk about the work that has been done by a city councillor in Hamilton by the name of Matthew Green. I initiated some work that was to be done, and I want to make sure that I get it in before my time is up.

In Hamilton, which I believe is the first to bring forward rules and regulations for payday loans, it was moved by council that they will be required to pay an annual licensing fee of \$750. They will be required to post signage, designed by the city, showing the annualized interest rate they're charging. They will have to hand out material, also designed by the city, informing their customers of debt counselling.

These are good steps, but there's only so much a municipality can do. For example, municipalities have no authority to limit the number of payday loan business licences as they do with taxicabs or adult entertainment, nor can they regulate the rates the businesses charge. That's why it's so important that the provincial government step up to the plate and fulfill its responsibilities to the people of Ontario.

These are important changes that need to be happening in the province of Ontario. I think it's unfortunate that the bill doesn't go far enough to ensure that we are protecting our most vulnerable citizens in society. I will look forward to having a few moments after the roundup.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't think we'll get the questions and comments in. It's 10 after. The House is now recessed till 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1009 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je suis heureuse d'accueillir de nombreux membres de communautés francophones qui viennent de partout de la province et qui sont ici avec nous aujourd'hui pour célébrer la journée de la Francophonie avec les membres du caucus PC.

On a Denis Labelle, Louise Pinet, Anne Gerson, Thierry Lasserre, Rita Giroux-Patience, Diane Chaperon-Lor, Léonie Tchatat, Sylvie Ross, Jacinthe Desaulniers, Lise Marie Baudry, Suzette Hafner, Carol Jolin, Pierre Leonard, Jean-Gilles Pelletier, Denis Vaillancourt, Denis Laframboise, Pierre Tessier, Annie Dell, Alex Black de FESFO, j'espère, est ici; Michel Tremblay, Carole Nkoa, Sébastien Skrobos, Myriam Vigneault, Louise Gauvreau, et mon ami Alain Beaudoin, qui a reçu l'Ordre de la Pléiade.

Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome today, from the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, Carolyn Ferns, along with Carolyn Frank and Caleb Gaynor. I didn't hear his name mentioned by the previous member: also Stewart Kiff from my riding. Welcome.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm delighted to introduce Elizabeth Beattie and Michael Kelly to the House. They are two interns who started working in my office for the summer. Welcome. Thank you for being here.

M. Lorne Coe: C'est un plaisir pour moi de vous présenter des membres de la communauté francophone à travers la province qui sont ici aujourd'hui pour la journée francophone avec les membres du Parti PC de l'Ontario : Sylvie Landry, Stewart Kiff, Leo Regimbal, Christophe Plantiveau, Alexandre Herau, Donald Ipperciel, Jean Lemay, Cathy Thilavanh, Paul Le Vay, Yvette Plentai et Alain Perron.

Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome the representatives who are with us today from Prompt Payment Ontario. I'd like to welcome Sandra Skivsky, Brandon Pagneau and Sean McFarling from Prompt Payment, who I'll have the chance to meet with later today.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the Legislature a family friend who's visiting, David Munro.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's my pleasure to introduce the delegates from Prompt Payment Ontario. They're here today to talk about the crucial need for prompt payment legislation in our province and we welcome all of Queen's Park to join them this evening at their reception in the legislative dining room, which runs from 5:30 till 7:30.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature a group of nurses from Hamilton representing ONA. Welcome to Queen's Park.

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Bienvenue à tous nos amis francophones aujourd'hui.

I'd also like to welcome the family of Claire Atkins to Queen's Park this morning. Claire is the new page for my riding of Don Valley West, who I had the pleasure of meeting with yesterday. Joining us in the public gallery is Claire's family: her mother, Faye; her father, Peter; her brother, Neil; her grandmother Anna Ruth; her uncle Mark; and cousins Maddie and Connor. I want to just make a special welcome back to both Peter, who was a page in 1977, and Mark, who was a page in 1983. I hope you've passed on all your secrets. Welcome.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome the representatives of Prompt Payment Ontario I met with this morning—Francesca Palleschi, Anantha Narayanan and Sandra Skivsky—here to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to welcome the family of page captain Aadil Rehan: his mother, Nazish Rehan Malik; his father, Rehan Malik; and his sister, Eesha Rehan. Welcome to the Legislature today.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome Craig Baker, the director of Ontario public sector sales, enterprise business

unit, from Rogers Communications. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome David Bain and my sister Shannon McDonell to the Legislature today.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to welcome my childhood friend, who is here on behalf of the Northeastern Ontario Construction Association, Denis Shank. I'm looking forward to talking to you about prompt payment.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to recognize that we are joined today by three summer students who are working with me for the summer. Irina Samborski, Natalie Cordiano and Sarah El-Tohamy are here in the gallery.

I also want to extend my welcome to those who are visiting Queen's Park today on behalf of the prompt payment movement.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I am honoured to introduce a good friend of mine who's visiting from Grand Bend today, Paul Gunning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Michael Mantha: Ça me fait grand plaisir de recevoir nos amis, spécialement M. Jolin, qui est ici avec nos amis de la francophonie. Bonjour.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to introduce the grandparents of page Isabela Rittinger, being Isabelle and Glen Rittinger from my constituency of Ajax-Pickering. They will be in the public gallery this morning.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park, from my riding of Burlington, Briar Emond and her daughter Sterling Haskins in the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm happy to introduce Peter Henderson—he's in the east gallery—with Ideovation, working on urban agricultural projects; and my good friend Stewart Kiff. I'm happy to have him in the House as he witnesses his member usurp my private member's initiative on daycare wait-list fees.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It is with great pleasure that I would like to introduce, from the Christian Labour Association of Canada, Kevin Gates, Hank Beekhuis and Mohammad Kasraee. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before we move into question period, there are two quick comments. One comment is about what was just said in an introduction. Introductions are intended to introduce our guests to the House and nothing else, as we do with petitions: just petitions. No editorial comments on either. You have plenty of time to debate issues in other circumstances. This is the moment for introducing guests, and it's the moment, in petitions, to present petitions.

I appreciate all of your co-operation. I don't want to hear it again.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to correct my record on two points. First of all, I wanted to make sure that I included Maddie and Connor, who are

page Claire's cousins. Secondly, in my remarks last night at the late show, I referenced the member for Niagara Falls. I of course intended to say the former member for Niagara Falls.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That's an appropriate point of order and a correction of the record, with no other debate.

It is time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The government could be fighting climate change by investing in Ontario. Instead, I've learned the Liberals think the best way to fight climate change is by sending hundreds of millions of dollars to California.

In fact, according to industry experts, by 2020, Ontario will be spending nearly \$300 million a year to buy emissions credits from California in order to meet their emissions targets under the Western Climate Initiative. Where is that money coming from? It's being paid by Ontario businesses and families.

Instead of fighting climate change in Ontario, why does the Premier insist on sending \$300 million to California?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It just gets worse every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to be jumping on any time in which I'm standing, and if it starts when I sit, I'm going to get you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Last time I checked, Ontario was part of the globe. Ontario is part of a world that is facing the greatest threat to humanity that we have ever faced.

If the Leader of the Opposition wants to deny that we face that challenge, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to suggest that somehow, we just say, "Oh, well, climate change is a problem," and then do nothing about it, Mr. Speaker, he could not be more wrong.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is our responsibility to tackle this threat. It is our responsibility to put in place a system that is going to advance innovation, and re-invest—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —in companies that are going to develop innovation and develop technology.

That's why we're linking our markets to California and Quebec, because we understand that—

Mr. Todd Smith: "Make America Great Again."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —this is a global threat and we each have to do our part.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier hasn't denied her plan to help California's economic development, so I'll be a bit more specific.

To the Premier: The people of this province deserve a climate change strategy that reduces emissions, creates jobs and saves people money in Ontario. Instead of fighting climate change in Ontario, the Liberals plan on sending \$300 million a year to subsidize the wealthiest in Beverly Hills. People in Milton and Orangeville will be sending millions of dollars to Malibu and Orange county.

Mr. Speaker, on the Premier's last junket to California, did the governor thank her for her \$300 million that she will be subsidizing California with?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm so glad that the Leader of the Opposition mentioned Orangeville. My grandchildren live in Orangeville and I have to tell you that there are nieces and nephews and children and grandchildren who are going to benefit from the plan that we're putting in place because we're going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We're going to invest in companies that are developing technology that, yes, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions here in Ontario, but will also provide solutions around the globe.

That's our responsibility. We have one of the most highly educated populations in the world. It is our responsibility to tackle this challenge and do it in partnership with jurisdictions around the world. I'm sorry the Leader of the Opposition does not get that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Sending \$300 million to California will do nothing to reduce emissions in Ontario. And that money is just the beginning. It actually gets worse. Experts suggest—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: What's your plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation, come to order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: —by 2030, Ontario companies will be paying almost \$3 billion a year to buy credits from California—\$3 billion that companies could be spending right here in Ontario to fight climate change and create jobs.

There are different approaches. You look at British Columbia, where the money collected from carbon pricing is spent in their province, in British Columbia.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Trinity-Spadina, come to order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: In British Columbia they're not sending money to California, like this Premier wants to

do. Instead, our Premier wants to send \$3 billion to San Diego and Santa Cruz.

Mr. Speaker, it's bad enough that this government has been killing jobs for 13 years. Why is this government subsidizing California?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: In Santa Cruz, she'll be known as Santa Claus.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time. I'm desperately close to warnings, and that's my signal to you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is a market that we are entering with Quebec and California. There's an exchange of credits. The revenue to Ontario will be \$1.9 billion. That money will be reinvested in green technology, in retrofitting businesses and homes.

The difference between this jurisdiction and other jurisdictions is our greenhouse gas emissions are going down. That is a point of the cap-and-trade system.

I am so committed to working in conjunction with other jurisdictions. The weather here is the weather all over the globe. We don't live in a state that's separate from the rest of the globe. We can't cut ourselves off from the rest of the planet. That may be the kind of—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Do you live in a glass bubble?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're not helping.

Wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That may be the kind of isolation that the Leader of the Opposition thinks is possible here, but it's not reality. We live in the real world and we have to tackle climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Obviously the government made a miscalculation: They didn't realize they'd be sending \$3 billion to California. In BC, BC dollars stay in BC to fight climate change, which is appropriate. Under this government's plan, they are subsidizing California. The right thing to do is to acknowledge they made a mistake and to correct course.

In fact, the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity revealed "there is no guarantee that" under the Ontario plan, "emissions will be reduced within Ontario's borders," and that Ontario won't meet its reduction targets. While this government is unlikely to meet their emission targets, they're actually going to be helping put convertibles on the road in California.

Mr. Speaker, my question is this: It's still not clear why the Premier believes it's appropriate to help California, to subsidize California to create jobs and fight climate change, and why she doesn't want to do it here in Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, he could not be more wrong. We met our 2014 reduction targets. We're on track to meet our

2020 reduction targets. I will just say that is with no help from the former government, of which this member was a part, that denied climate change, that was not interested in taking part in the global fight against climate change.

It was a privilege for me to be able to attend the Paris summit with Prime Minister Trudeau and to work with the other provinces to make sure that we meet those targets. The work that we've done so far has been without the support of the former government. We are on track to reduce our targets by 2020.

This is humanity's challenge. This is humanity's challenge across the globe. If the Leader of the Opposition is not interested in joining us, we'll go it alone without him.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier—

Hon. Charles Sousa: Sit on your hands like you always do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance, second time.

Mr. Patrick Brown: There was no denial by the government that they are sending \$3 billion by 2030 to California. Ontario deserves a climate change strategy that reduces emissions in Ontario, a plan that actually creates jobs and saves people money.

Today, the environment minister's plan will be before the Liberal caucus. Will the energy minister vote against a plan that will drive hydro prices even higher? Will the economic development minister vote against a plan that kills thousands of auto jobs? Or will they instead vote for a plan that will send almost \$300 million a year to subsidize the wealthiest in Beverly Hills?

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, why does she think it's appropriate for Ontario to be subsidizing Beverly Hills?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it's appropriate to fight climate change.

Mr. Patrick Brown: In Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it's appropriate to join a market with Quebec and with California. You know, the Leader of the Opposition says, "In Ontario." Mr. Speaker, you can't fight climate change in Ontario without fighting it around the globe. It's a global challenge. If the Leader of the Opposition doesn't understand that, then he doesn't have to join us. But we're going to join that market. There will be money that flows back and forth. We will reinvest—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are you going to fix China?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will come to order, and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There will be money in that market that will flow back and forth. We will re-invest the \$1.9 billion in Ontario businesses and Ontario residents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary. The member from Huron—Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Premier: Not only is this government continuing to dodge the truth that \$3 billion of taxpayers' money will go to California every year, but yesterday, we received a letter from the Financial Accountability Officer. Mr. LeClair said that the Liberals twisted his committee testimony in which he detailed the serious lack of transparency with the government's cap-and-trade scheme.

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I was shocked to hear that the member for Beaches—East York twisted the words of the Financial Accountability Officer and claimed that he consulted with Mr. LeClair, but in reality, no consultations ever took place.

Speaker, why is this Premier allowing the member from Beaches—East York to misrepresent the testimony of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Why is this Premier allowing the member from Beaches—East York to twist the testimony of an independent officer of this Legislature?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks very much.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't risk one more comment for a warning.

Minister.

Applause.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the support from the party opposite. It's too bad they're not so enthusiastic about climate change.

The investments that we make with the proceeds here create pools of capital that attract capital. As you may know, California and Ontario are the two leading jurisdictions in foreign direct investment. When you see the action plan, you'll have a sense of the private and public partnerships in pooling capital.

Yes, there will be money that flows back and forth—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Huron—Bruce, come to order. You asked the question.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: But without a linked market, the price of carbon per tonne would skyrocket to exorbitant and unaffordable levels, which is what they're suggesting—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

NURSES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Today we're joined by nurses from Hamilton. Last year St. Joseph's was forced to cut 52 nurses. This year, they're scheduled to cut a further 61 nurses. They're being cut in the recovery room, the operating room, the kidney program, cardiology, acute mental health, complex care, respirology, pre-surgery assessment, dialysis, day surgery, medicine, medical rehab and geriatric outreach.

Will the Premier agree to stop the cuts to health care services in Hamilton?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've answered this question a number of times. The leader of the third party is simply wrong: There are more nurses working in Ontario this year than there were last year. We're making a \$1-billion investment in health care as a result of our budget, and of that, \$345 million is for hospitals. We have increased the number of nurses year over year. We continue to invest in the health care system.

But what is really critical to understand is that if we do not transform our health care system, if we do not work to change the health care system so that it delivers health care where people need it, when people need it, understanding the demographics, then our health care system will not be able to respond to the realities of our population.

That transformation is under way. There are hospitals being built around the province. There are hospitals being renovated. And there are more nurses this year than there were last year in the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It doesn't help when the Premier doesn't talk about the realities of people in this province and in Hamilton. It's not just St. Joseph's. Hamilton Health Sciences was forced to cut 25 nurses. These are real cuts. This is going to impact cancer patients, adults with mental health, people with heart disease, kidney issues, people going for surgeries. These are all the people who are going to feel these cuts.

Will the Premier stop the cuts to Hamilton's health care services?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to thank the member opposite for the question and the opportunity to clear up the misconceptions that are being presented.

My ministry, as you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, is in constant communication with St. Joseph's health system in Hamilton during and through these staffing changes. I'm happy to announce that vacancy and early retirement absorb all nurse staffing changes. No nurse who wished to continue working faced a job loss or labour disruption. I think that shows the difference between how our government is managing the system—and, quite frankly,

St. Joseph's in Hamilton is one of the leaders in that transformation of care, moving more care out into the community through an integrated model. But it demonstrates the difference that we're taking, compared to both the parties opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Speaker, I don't know how the Premier and her minister have stood up in this House and said that hospital services are not being cut. Ask any of the nurses here, ask the patients who are being treated in hallways or in hospital conference rooms; these cuts are real and people are facing them.

Will the Premier really look people in the eye and deny that health care cuts and hospital cuts are actually happening?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the nurses who are with us here this morning.

There won't be changes or cuts to services being provided as a result of these changes. We're increasing the budget of St. Joseph's Healthcare by \$3 million this year, almost a 50% increase since 2003.

I want to remind the third party of their record in Hamilton when they were in power. They cut \$8 million from what was known as the Hamilton Civic Hospital, the General hospital and the Juravinski Hospital. They cut \$5 million from St. Joseph's Healthcare in 1994, when they came into power. In Burlington, of course, at Joseph Brant, they cut \$2 million. There were layoffs, as well. Some 115 RNs received layoff notices at Chedoke-McMaster. They laid off 61 RNs at the Hamilton Civic Hospital. They closed 124 beds and had 71 layoffs at St. Joe's.

So we're not going to take lessons from their record. We're doing it in a much more responsible way.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This question, again, is to the Premier. Hospital funding should keep up with inflation. Hospital funding should also keep up with population growth. The Liberal government likes to talk a lot about hospital funding increases.

Will the Premier answer this simple question: Will she commit to ensuring that funding for hospital care keeps up with population growth and with inflation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we have increased funding for health care year over year—this year, \$1 billion for health care and \$345 million for hospitals alone.

We understand that there have to be changes in the health care system. The member opposite does not seem to understand that there has to be a transformation of the way we deliver services in health care. People demand it. People want a different delivery of service. They want health care where they are living. They want it in their homes and in the community. That's the change that we're undergoing right now as we continue to increase the funding for health care year over year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the minister see health care as a PR exercise. Announcing funding that doesn't keep up with population growth or inflation may make a great headline for the Liberal Party and the Liberal government, but it certainly doesn't help patients.

So the question is this: Will the Premier make health care about the patients in Ontario and not about the government's PR machine?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I just wish the third party would talk about the whole picture and not just the gross layoffs that they are drawn to, that they would admit that we're increasing the line item for hospital operating funding by more than 2%. They keep insisting that it's 1%. We are increasing base funding by 1%, but there's an additional 1.1% for other operating costs.

We're investing \$12 billion over the next decade in capital investments, to add to the 35 major projects that are currently under way: the capital investments, new hospitals, renovations and expansions that are taking place all over the province.

We're investing in our nurse practitioners, with an additional \$85 million for recruitment and retention.

We're investing 75 million new dollars in palliative care.

So that's a total investment of an additional \$1 billion into our health care budget.

Hon. Michael Coteau: And you voted against it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This is the reality: Nurses are being fired at a rate of three a day, or 90 a month. Beds are closing, and people are being treated in hallways.

The Liberals want to talk about objective measures. Let's tell you about those objective measures: Per capita hospital spending has decreased in the last three years. Listen, the last time this happened was under Mike Harris. This is cold, hard evidence that hospital spending is not keeping up with population growth or inflation.

Will the Premier do the right thing and commit today to ensuring that hospital funding keeps up with population growth and inflation?

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think it's important, because nurses are here, that we talk about the changes in the nursing complement in this province. I'm actually going to quote from what's readily and publicly available from the College of Nurses of Ontario. In the past year alone there were 2,800 net new nursing positions for nurses in this province. In fact, in the last five years we've increased, just in the hospital sector, the net—not the gross, because I know you love to talk about the gross numbers. The net new nursing positions in the hospital sector in the last five years, the majority of them filled by

RNs, were 7,625 net new positions, an increase in the complement of nurses working in our hospitals.

That's the kind of commitment we have. That's the kind of investment that we're making in this province.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Yesterday, Ontario's Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth released his report entitled *We Have Something to Say*, which outlines the challenges facing young people in our province with special needs. We heard in the report from Cliff McIntosh.

I want to read an excerpt from Cliff's mom: "I think we spent between \$50,000 and \$70,000 on private therapy and we were literally on the verge of selling our house. When we were in the process of listing our house, we got the call that Cliff's number had come up and that we would start receiving government-funded intensive behavioural therapy. We held onto the house with our fingernails."

Now that you have removed for kids over the age of five access to IBI, kids like Cliff are out of luck. Minister, when will you stop forcing families to sell everything and take out loans just to give their kids IBI therapy?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I really appreciate this question being asked this week because yesterday our provincial advocate did release the report titled *We Have Something to Say*. Many youth with special needs were directly involved in developing and writing that report. I was very honoured to join them yesterday in the listening circle to hear from the youth who contributed to that report and talked about the issues and challenges that children with special needs across the spectrum face, whether that is before school, during school life and beyond.

We heard incredible stories about how they are focusing on their abilities and recognizing that their environment needs to be there to adequately support them, whether that's gaining access to services or whether it's getting a diagnosis. I was very impressed with the work yesterday and I'm very appreciative that the advocate invited me to the meeting. I'll talk more in the supplementary about—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm glad that the minister heard the report. I just want her to act.

The provincial advocate has called your new autism strategy "a mug's game." To quote the provincial advocate, "Don't pretend this is about the child and providing them with what they need. It isn't." That is an independent officer of this assembly.

The minister has said she is open to suggestions. Well, here's ours: Stop removing kids over the age of five from receiving IBI therapy until we have a coordinated provin-

cial autism strategy that covers all ministries and everyone in Ontario regardless of their age or developmental stage, because we understand that autism doesn't end at five.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think it's important to acknowledge that we do have a special-needs strategy in Ontario. Autism is part of that, of course. We have made significant investments, hundreds of thousands of dollars every year, in three key areas, which are identifying kids needing connections and assessments early; coordinating service planning for children with multiple or complex needs; and making the delivery of rehab services more seamless. That's what our special needs strategy is all about.

Yes, there were some voices there yesterday as well in terms of autism. I'm continuing to engage in discussions with youth facing autism and their families, as well as associations and stakeholder groups that are helping guide us and want to be part of the implementation of the new autism strategy going forward. I welcome their suggestions. I welcome their feedback. We'll work with everyone to make sure we support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. As stakeholders have pointed out, the 2016 Ontario budget again squandered any chance to make child care a priority in this province. We know families in Ontario are paying the highest child care fees in the country. They're on the longest waiting lists. We know some parents, particularly women, are being forced to delay getting back into the workforce because they can't find a spot for their child.

To make matters worse, parents are being forced to pay fees just to get on these overwhelmingly long wait-lists. Will the Premier immediately ensure that parents are no longer forced to pay fees just to get on a wait-list for their child care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member. I know that he's introducing a private member's bill. I also want to acknowledge the member for Beaches–East York, who raised this issue with us. It's an issue that crosses party boundaries. We understand that.

We're committed to modernizing child care in Ontario. We've doubled the funding for child care, a 90% increase since 2003. We continue to provide more monies to municipalities, an overall increase of funding of \$16.3 million over last year. We've listened to parents. We're committed to eliminating the child care wait-list fees in Ontario, and we'll work with providers to get that regulation posted very soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Child care is a smart investment. For every \$1 spent, the province can see a \$1.50 return. I just—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Peter, you should be ashamed of yourself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Beaches–East York is warned.

Please finish.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Why, thank you, Speaker. I just want to make it clear to the Premier: Introducing regulations that child care experts and stakeholders strongly disagree with is not a child care policy. Allowing wait-lists for subsidized spaces to grow and grow is also not a child care policy. Forcing parents, particularly women, to stay home because they can't find a child care space is also not a child care policy.

Ontarians deserve a comprehensive, evidence-based, long-term plan for universal, high-quality child care in this province. Will the Premier take the first step? Will she ensure that families are not forced to pay fees just to sit on waiting lists?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is an example of you can't take yes for an answer. I've already said that, Mr. Speaker. I've already said that, yes, the issue has been raised by the member for Toronto–Danforth. The issue was raised by the member for Beaches–East York. We have already said that we listened to parents. We're committed to eliminating child care wait-list fees in Ontario. We'll continue to work with parents and child care providers to move forward on our commitment very, very soon.

So yes, we are going to do that. At the same time, we're going to continue to work with municipalities to increase funding in child care. The Child Care and Early Years Act provides a new legislative framework to increase access and oversight in Ontario's child care sector. That, put together, is a child care strategy, and that's what we've implemented.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. International markets play a critical role in the growth of Ontario's economy. Trade missions are the best way for us to connect Ontario businesses with the international market. They're also part of the government's plan to boost Ontario's economy by attracting new investments, facilitating innovative partnerships and helping the province's businesses export globally.

There is a company called Meridian Lightweight Technologies. They have a plant in Strathroy, Ontario. On your recent trade mission to China, you toured the headquarters of Wanfeng, the parent company of Meridian, to learn about the investments and potential opportunities for expansion. Speaker, could the minister please outline and provide more information on agreements that were made during this trade mission?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Brampton–Springdale for asking the question. The Deputy Premier and I had a very wonderful, 10-day, productive trade mission in China and Hong Kong. Yes,

we toured the headquarters of Wanfeng to learn more about its investment in Ontario and their potential plan for expansion, creating even more jobs.

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We signed a significant MOU between Ontario and China National Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corp. to build new trade and investment opportunities with this leading supplier of agri-products, diversified foodstuffs and food services.

While in China, we also renewed the Ontario-Henan friendship agreement to strengthen ties between the two provinces and encourage economic co-operation, investment and trade.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: According to the Conference Board of Canada, every \$100-million increase in exports creates approximately 1,000 new jobs. China is a priority market for Ontario. Over the course of the 2015 business mission to China, Ontario delegates signed more than 100 agreements, with an estimated value of \$2.5 billion, and deals that may create as many as 1,700 jobs.

In 2014, Ontario's total agri-food sales to China, including its exports to Hong Kong, reached \$832 million, representing Ontario's second-largest export market for agri-food products. Speaker, will the minister tell us about the results of business missions to China?

Hon. Michael Chan: In China, we had a meeting with the China Federation of Overseas Chinese Entrepreneurs to bring a delegation of 80 entrepreneurs to Ontario. We promoted the Toronto Business Investment Forum that will be held in 2017 as part of Ontario 150 celebrations. Overall, we brought \$220 million worth of investments to the province.

Speaker, let me share with you how powerful trade missions can be. During our mission in 2014, we met a company called Perfect (China), encouraging the company to send its award-winning employees to Ontario. I'm happy to report that, starting today, 5,000—yes, 5,000—visitors from Perfect (China) will spend the next few days in Ontario.

Trade missions create relationships. Trade missions create jobs.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE EN FRANÇAIS

M. Patrick Brown: Ma question s'adresse à la première ministre. Nous savons que depuis deux ans, votre gouvernement a mis sur pied le Comité consultatif de l'éducation postsecondaire en langue française. Nous savons aussi que ce comité a déjà remis son rapport final. Votre gouvernement cache ce rapport au public.

Sachant que la communauté franco-ontarienne demande depuis des années la gouvernance d'une université de langue française et un meilleur accès à des programmes postsecondaires en français, je vous demande : quand allez-vous rendre public ce rapport?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: C'est très important d'avoir cette conversation, parce que je suis fière de notre

travail avec la communauté francophone afin d'établir des programmes pour les étudiants postsecondaires dans l'Université d'Ottawa et Glendon College à Toronto. Mais c'est très important de continuer ce travail pour établir si nous avons assez de programmes pour les étudiants francophones pour tous leurs besoins postsecondaires. C'est une conversation dans laquelle nous sommes très engagés.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Question?

M. Patrick Brown: Encore à la première ministre. Elle a peut-être écouté une différente question, parce que ma question est : quand est-ce que le gouvernement va rendre public ce rapport?

Depuis des mois, le gouvernement répond qu'il est trop tôt pour agir, même s'il sait que de nombreux jeunes francophones perdent leur langue et leur culture car ils n'ont pas accès à des programmes dans leur langue et dans leur région. Les francophones de l'Ontario méritent d'avoir accès à une université de langue française que les francophones veulent gérer.

Le gouvernement a dit qu'il appuie une université francophone. Mais la question est : est-ce que vous commencez ce processus cette année, ou est-ce que c'est une autre fausse promesse?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Je crois que c'est très important d'avoir une francophonie forte, une culture forte, une langue francophone ici en Ontario très forte. J'ai toujours dit que c'est très important d'avoir accès à des programmes en français. Je n'ai—je n'ai—

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Jamais dit.

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Je n'ai jamais dit que ça doit être un édifice, mais ça doit être des programmes. Nous avons travaillé avec l'Université d'Ottawa et avec Glendon College pour assurer des programmes.

Mais nous avons beaucoup de travail à faire. Je veux travailler avec la francophonie pour assurer l'accès à des programmes. Merci, monsieur le Président.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci.

A reminder: to the Chair, please, when you speak.

New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday, we learned that Metrolinx is trying to jack up the fees it charges OC Transpo for the privilege of using Presto. Metrolinx currently charges 2% of the fare revenue. Now it wants to charge 10%.

The first version of Presto was obsolete upon delivery and full of bugs. Then Metrolinx gave a costly sole-source contract to the same company that built the first one. Now, as cost overruns have piled up, the Auditor General says, "By the time it is fully developed, Presto will be among the more expensive fare-card systems in the world..."

Why is Metrolinx forcing the Ottawa transit riders to pay for its own costly mistakes?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: This is a question from the member from Niagara Falls that's eerily reminiscent of the questions that he asked at estimates committee. In

fact, the questions that I've now heard from that member over the last couple of days have been, on a number of occasions, without any particular merit. I think, in this particular case, he's deriving a great deal of his information from a media report that may have appeared over the last day or two.

What I know is that Metrolinx and the team at Presto are working very closely with the city of Ottawa and with all of our 905 municipal service providers. We are engaged in a renegotiation with respect to the Presto contract.

At the end of it all, making sure that we have a fare card system or platform that works effectively for Ottawa, and for all of the transit systems in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, is an important companion piece to the unprecedented transit investments that this government is making in Ottawa, in the GTHA and across the province of Ontario.

I would have thought that member would support making transit more—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It was a non-answer.

This is back to the minister: Negotiations with Metrolinx are always one-sided. Metrolinx and the government can force transit agencies to take whatever deal they want.

In 2010, the Premier, who was then the Minister of Transportation, told the TTC to stop shopping around for a better smart card. She said the TTC had better take Presto or else she would cancel funding for Transit City. She eventually killed Transit City anyway, but only after the TTC had been bent to her will and agreed to take Presto.

Metrolinx currently charges the TTC 5% of fare revenue for Presto. When that agreement runs out, will Metrolinx also demand 10% of the TTC fare revenue?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, there are so many inaccuracies in that question that it's hard for me to know exactly where to start. I guess I shouldn't be surprised, considering that the NDP traditionally never presents a clear plan for transit investments here in the province of Ontario—certainly not in their last election platform or the one before that.

Having said that—because this question deals more specifically with Toronto and a future potential renegotiation of a contract that has not yet expired—I know, as every member on this side of the House knows, that having a fare card system in place is a key component of making sure that we deliver on fare integration for this region. That will mean that transit becomes a more popular, more viable, more affordable and more enviable option for people to leave their cars at home.

Traditionally, I would have thought that that would be something that Ontario's NDP would support. But, alas, I was wrong.

FERTILITY SERVICES

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We know that infertility

is an issue with which one in six Canadian families struggle. Mr. Speaker, I have a close family member who knows this struggle all too well.

With private in-vitro fertilization services costing as much as \$10,000 per cycle, fertility services would be out of reach for many people who dream of growing a family. That's why it's encouraging to see that Ontario is making fertility treatments more accessible by contributing to the cost of one in vitro fertilization cycle. The province is also ensuring that fertility services are accessible to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender or family status.

1120

Can the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care share with this House how his plan is improving access to fertility services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre for this important question. We know that access to fertility services was not equitable in the past, and our government has taken action. That's why today over 50 different clinics across this province now offer government-funded fertility treatments. It's why our government is investing 50 million new dollars each year to expand access to IVF treatments in addition to the \$20 million a year we've already invested in the past. I'm happy to say that we're providing this expanded access for Ontarians regardless of sexual orientation, gender or family status.

In addition, in budget 2016, Ontario committed to investing \$1 million in new funding to support those women and their families whose pregnancies unfortunately end in miscarriage or stillbirth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer, and for giving hope to so many families in Ontario. It's important to note that this new program to expand access to fertility services is going to help over 5,000 Ontarians each year who are trying to start and grow a family. I know that the ministry is working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to ensure that patients do get the highest quality fertility services.

Next week is Canadian Infertility Awareness Week. It really is an ideal opportunity to raise awareness about infertility. It reminds us of why it is so important to undertake high-quality research on infertility and pregnancy loss.

Can the minister please provide an update to this House on how Ontario compares to the rest of Canada when it comes to accessing these kinds of services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again to the member for this supplementary question. As a family doctor, I've worked with many families, couples and individuals struggling with infertility. I believe that every person should have an equal opportunity to grow their family. Income should never be a barrier.

On the occasion of Canadian infertility week next week, Conceivable Dreams, an organization dedicated to achieving equitable access to funding for in vitro

fertilization, conducted a ranking of Canada's provinces based on access and support to those struggling with infertility. I'm proud to report that Ontario is the leader in fertility care amongst all the provinces right across Canada. Our government is committed to ensuring that all Ontarians have equal access to high-quality health care services, regardless of income, geography or any other factor.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is to the Premier. In March 2014, after flip-flopping on the important private member's bill from the MPP from Vaughan, your government announced an independent review of the Construction Lien Act. The former Bill 69 clearly identified a need to close gaps in Ontario's construction laws in order to better protect workers and job creators in Ontario's vital construction sector.

This review was announced over two years ago. I understand your Attorney General now has the final copy. How many small and medium-sized companies have to go out of business before this overdue report is brought forward and acted upon? Or will the government be burying it like the report of the expert panel examining Ontario's business support programs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the member for that excellent question. I think it's an issue we're all engaged in in this House. I think that when you look at the experience of the province of Ontario when it comes to labour peace, when you look to productivity, when you look at the way we work together with government and business on projects, we understand that one of the things that keeps business going, obviously, is the need to get paid in a timely manner. We understand that.

The background work has been done on this issue. It's been done in what I think is a very professional manner. It's going to give this House and all members of this House the information they deserve to have in order to make the sort of decision that is so important to the future of Ontario construction companies.

I know on this side of the House we're committed to this. The Premier has spoken publicly on this issue. We're prepared to move ahead on this very important issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: The review was first announced in March 2014 and, after many announcements, re-announcements and delays, I'm told that the government now has a final copy of the report, nearly 26 months later. When it takes the government 26 months and several announcements just to get their own report, it's no wonder Ontario's construction workers can't count on getting paid on time.

There are over 400,000 workers in Ontario's construction industry. Every one of these people and their families are directly impacted by late and delayed payments. Prompt Payment Ontario is here today with the clear

message that contractors, suppliers, workers and their families are being put at risk and need action today.

The Attorney General has the report. How many more people have to lose their jobs before this Liberal government will take any action on prompt payment?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to take a moment to thank the member opposite for the question and also to thank the Minister of Labour for his first answer.

As was mentioned in the first question, before becoming Minister of Transportation I was very proud to bring forward Bill 69 regarding the prompt payment issue. I know that the MPP for Brant also, prior to Bill 69, brought forward private member's legislation on the same topic. It's important for us to recognize that there has been a very, very genuine effort on the part of our government to deal with both the Construction Lien Act and the prompt payment question.

Certainly, with my own experience in the sector prior to becoming an MPP, and, frankly, representing a community for which the construction industry is so crucial by way of employment, we want to make sure at all times that we get this right. It's why the review is being conducted; it's why this government, under the leadership of the Premier, has taken the issue back.

We will get it right. We'll continue to make sure that the construction industry in Ontario flourishes and that payment flows appropriately.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Today, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority holds its annual meeting. In 2015, airport employees handled more than 41 million passengers. It's the largest transportation hub in Canada and one of Canada's largest workplaces, with over 4,000 employees, many of whom are from my riding and from the Peel region.

While most believe that employees all work directly for the airport, they actually don't. In fact, it's a complicated system of contractors and subcontractors that run the airport. This means that for thousands of employees, there is no job security, no sick days, no guarantees in scheduling and, what's worse, a wage that's very difficult to live on.

To make matters even more difficult, the current system of contract flipping, where contracts for services are turned over to the lowest bidders every couple of years, makes matters even worse and makes it precarious employment.

Will the Premier call for an end to contract flipping in the Greater Toronto Airports Authority?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Since forming government, this government has realized that the workplace that a lot of people are entering today, and particularly the young people in this province, simply isn't the workplace it was many years ago. We haven't looked at the

Employment Standards Act since the mid-1990s; we haven't looked at the Labour Relations Act since around 2000. We understand that the workplace is changing. We understand that there's global competition that is driving an awful lot of that.

In response to that, what we've done is we've implemented the Changing Workplaces Review. Two very esteemed individuals, one associated with the business community and one associated with the labour community, have spent the last year travelling the province of Ontario hearing from experts in this regard. They're preparing a report that will be out very, very shortly which will outline some of the changes and address some of the concerns that are being addressed by the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Airport workers screen passengers for safety, they handle our bags and they refuel our planes. Their work brings in billions of dollars in revenue into the GTA every year—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, second time.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh:—yet employees struggle to make ends meet. They deserve at least a \$15 minimum wage.

This is my question to the Premier: Does the Premier support the call from Toronto airport workers for at least a \$15 minimum wage? Does the Premier support this call?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The province of Ontario, as I understand it, has the highest minimum wage in the country, if not the continent, and continues to lead in that regard. We've put in a system that the business community and the labour community have praised us for, in that these changes take place to the minimum wage in a very predictable and fair way. It's indexed to the consumer price index. It's announced in April and it's implemented in October of that year. That allows businesses to prepare for those increases.

The member seems to be dwelling on issues that fall primarily within the federal domain. I'd like to refer to—

Hon. Jeff Leal: He's heading to Ottawa.

1130

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Maybe Ottawa is in the answer here somewhere, Speaker, but certainly I look forward to the report that's coming out from the Changing Workplaces Review, which is going to address concerns that have been brought to our attention as a government, specifically as it relates to the purview of the province of Ontario, not the government of Canada.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, every day correctional officers across Ontario work hard to keep our communities safe, and for that we are all very grateful. Theirs is a difficult job, and we thank them for their tireless efforts and dedication. That's

why I was proud to bring forward my private member's bill to establish an annual Correctional Services Staff Recognition Week, so that every Ontarian can recognize the hard work and dedication of correctional staff in our province.

But as we pay tribute to those who keep our communities safe, it is important that we also work hard to keep our institutions safe. Mr. Speaker, my riding of Halton is home to the Maplehurst Correctional Complex and the Vanier Centre for Women. I often hear from my community members about the need to improve safety at these institutions and others across the province. Would the minister please update this Legislature on what he is doing to make our institutions safer?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Halton for that important question and for introducing Bill 116, the Correctional Services Staff Recognition Week Act. Our government very much supports the bill and hopes that it passes soon.

We are working hard to transform corrections to create a system that truly enhances rehabilitation and reintegration programs, strengthens inmate mental health supports, promotes diversion and community programs, and enhances staffing levels and institutional safety.

Last week, I was joined by the member from Halton, along with Monte Vieselmeyer and Tammy Carson from OPSEU, when I made an important announcement that would enhance staff and institutional safety by investing \$9.5 million to install full-body X-ray scanners in all of our correctional facilities over two years. It is expected that a body X-ray scanner will be installed at Maplehurst Correctional Complex in 2016-17 and in the Vanier Centre for Women in 2017-18.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the minister for his great work. I was pleased to join the minister last week to announce the new X-ray body scanners that will help keep our institutions safe. I am glad that the minister will be taking the next step to transform our correctional system and help build stronger and safer communities across our province. I know that many of Ontario's correctional officers have been calling for these devices, and I know the minister worked closely with them on this important safety improvement.

But, Mr. Speaker, Ontarians know that installing X-ray body scanners in all of our correctional institutions is only one part of the transformation of our correctional system in Ontario. To make our communities safer, we need to hire more correctional officers and offer more training, more mental health supports and better rehabilitation for inmates. Mr. Speaker, through you: Will the minister please explain what he is doing to implement these important changes?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The member from Halton is absolutely right: X-ray body scanners are a key pillar of our transformation of corrections. But we are also hard at work on a number of other elements to transform our correctional system and make our communities safer.

Recently, we announced the training of 24 new correctional officers for institutions in the north to further

increase staffing levels in the province's northern correctional facilities, which is part of our plan to hire 2,000 new correctional officers over the next three years.

We have also worked closely with the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health to develop additional mental health training for those who work in our institutions, and have added 32 new mental health nurses to our facility and are continuing to hire more. We will also be bringing forward more programming to enhance rehabilitation and reintegration.

These are all transformative changes and they will not happen overnight, but we are committed to working with our partners to transform corrections to build stronger and safer communities across Ontario. I welcome ideas from all members in this House to make that work happen.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. On January 14 of this year, the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council announced a \$1.5-million fund for educational materials on fire safety for local fire departments. The Helping Ontario Municipalities Educate—or HOME—offer would provide credits to fire departments to obtain free public fire safety education materials from the council's education centre.

Speaker, why did the fire marshal's council abruptly cancel the HOME offer just two months later, on March 24?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for asking the question. Our government is very much committed to supporting public education around fire safety in Ontario.

The member is right: In January, the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council established a \$1.5-million fund for the Ontario fire service to educate the public about fire safety. However, concerns were communicated to the fire marshal about the structure of the program. The fire marshal heard those concerns and is restructuring the program and will be announcing those changes in the near future. The fire marshal further advised that the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council would be exploring other options to provide public education materials for fire services in Ontario.

Speaker, let me be absolutely clear: This money will still be provided for public education about fire prevention. We're just restructuring the program to make sure that we get it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: Last month, the coroner's inquest was completed into the tragic fire deaths of three young people in Whitby, and four members of the same family in East Gwillimbury. The jury in the inquest recommended that both the fire marshal's office and the fire marshal's council continue to develop public education programs and materials on fire safety.

The jury was pretty clear that more needs to be done to teach fire safety. Mr. Speaker, no one does that better

than our local fire departments. When the coroner's office says that more needs to be done, why is the minister eliminating this much-needed fire safety education program?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I think the member and I are coming from the same place. I absolutely agree with the member that fire safety and fire prevention training are absolutely essential. I am cognizant of the recommendations that were made as well. Hopefully, he will be satisfied with my answer that the program is not being cancelled. It's just being restructured because of the concerns that the fire marshal heard from municipalities.

I think it's very prudent of the fire marshal to pay attention to those concerns and to take the fund back, to make sure that we get it right. He's working closely with the fire safety council as well. The program will continue.

You are absolutely right. I think all members will agree, in the House—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Through the Chair, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —Speaker, sorry; through you—that fire safety and prevention are absolutely important. But we want to make sure that the \$1.5 million is being invested appropriately and actually does fulfill the purpose of ensuring that municipalities, through their local fire services, can provide the appropriate education to prevent fires and promote fire safety.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, hospital transfers continue to jeopardize the health of patients in northern Ontario. In one case, an elderly man suffering from cancer was sent to another hospital for a CT scan. In the words of his daughter, "At 2:30 p.m., our dad was transported from Iroquois Falls to Temiskaming Shores by ambulance on a stretcher, all cozy, wrapped in blankets"—as it should be—"but at 9:30 p.m., he was sent back with no coat, no boots, in a taxi, in a snowstorm, a ride that took three hours."

The saddest thing is that this isn't an isolated case. This happens all the time in our area. I can give you other examples.

I'd like to make one thing very clear, Speaker: The health care workers involved did all that they were allowed to do. They went above and beyond. But what will it take for this government to fix the hospital transfer system in northern Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I absolutely agree—and I'm aware of and familiar with this particular case—that it's unacceptable, what this individual and his family and loved ones had to go through. I'm not going to provide any excuse for what happened. But I am intent on doing my best to ensure that it doesn't happen to other individuals, for people who are in, to begin with, such a fragile state.

The issue of non-urgent land ambulance transfers is an important one across this province, particularly in the north, because of the distances that are travelled and be-

cause of circumstances precisely like the member opposite has described. I know that in partnership with the Ministry of Transportation and others, we are working hard to create and make improvements to this issue so we can avoid the sorts of challenges described.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Children and Youth Services, on a point of order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Regarding the earlier question on children and special needs, I'd like to correct my record. I believe I said we invest hundreds of thousands of dollars per year; it's actually hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Labour, on a point of order.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, in response to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, I'd like to correct my record. I said that we have the highest minimum wage in the country, if not the continent. In fact, we have the highest minimum wage of any province in the country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron–Bruce, on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: A point of order: Will the member for Beaches–East York apologize to the FAO—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order, and the member knows it.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On a second point of order, the member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to introduce, on behalf of Toby Barrett, Stephen Denys. He's going to be here speaking about food safety today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, it's my honour to introduce, in the members' gallery, Dr. Larry Caven, president of the College of Veterinarians of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PRINCE OF WALES PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Steve Clark: It's an honour to rise in celebration of Brockville's Prince of Wales school, which marks its 125th anniversary on Saturday.

It was the fall of 1890 when 120 students, four teachers and one principal filed through the doors. They breathed life into the bricks and mortar of what was then the West Ward school. The heart they gave it kept it beating strong over two world wars, the Great Depression and 22 Prime Ministers.

Times have changed from the days when students traipsed to outdoor washrooms or shovelled coal into the huge burner in the basement. Those students were a hardy bunch, as they learned under gaslight until 1910. Budgetary restrictions—a reality even a century ago—meant that electricity was a late addition.

Thankfully, a mid-1950s effort to demolish the school for a modern building to accommodate a booming population failed. Instead, an expanded and renamed Prince of Wales school debuted in 1958.

Through it all, there was one constant: the commitment of teachers and support staff to give students a caring home away from home, a place where they're free to harness education's power to unlock a brighter future.

Prince of Wales is also close to my family's heart, Speaker. The twins Alex and Jordan, along with Meghan, began kindergarten there.

I ask all Ontarians to wish a very happy birthday to generations of proud Prince of Wales Panthers staff, parents and, especially, students.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr. John Vanthof: I rise today to express my concerns with changes made to the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The strength of the OTF has always been its connection to local areas through its front-line staff and volunteers. As a result, projects were approved based on the actual grassroots needs of the communities. In my riding, grants have been given for everything from ice shavers for curling clubs to accessibility renovations for Legions.

Sadly, this community involvement is coming to an end. First, the agency suspended its \$25-million capital grant program at the end of March. Now, to add insult to injury, it is reducing the number of granting catchment areas from 16 to five.

All of northern Ontario will now be in one area, despite differences in geography, culture, economic status and population base. This will result in less staff and volunteer connection in the north and much less opportunity for smaller groups to qualify for funding.

As is so often the case when rural northerners hear the words "streamline," "centralize" and "regionalize," what ends up happening is "cut" and "disappear."

The minister of culture and tourism has the authority to stop these changes, and I encourage him to do so. People who live in rural Ontario have a right to be treated equitably by this government and its agencies.

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Ms. Soo Wong: This week is National Nursing Week. The theme of this year's celebration, "Nurses: With You

Every Step of the Way," highlights the important role nurses play throughout our lives and in all health care situations.

Nurses are highly trained health professionals, skilled care providers and compassionate patient advocates who play a central role in our health care system. Representing the largest health care provider group in the province, nurses are consistently rated by the public as the most trusted profession. They are the backbone of Ontario's health care system.

Nurses have a wide range of knowledge and skills, Mr. Speaker, and for those reasons our government is expanding their scope of practice and implementing the Ontario nursing strategy, which helped to increase the number of nurses being hired full-time last year.

During this week, I'd like to recognize all nurses in Ontario, especially Kelly Brockington, a registered nurse at Scarborough Hospital and winner of the 2016 Human Touch Award for going above and beyond to get patients the care they need; Betty Wu-Lawrence, a front-line public health nurse, for promoting healthy schools in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt; and the Hong Fook nurse practitioner clinic for providing various mental health programs and services for Scarborough residents and their families.

As a former public health nurse and nursing professor, I'm proud to say that I'm a nurse first, then a politician. I will continue to work with my nursing colleagues to keep Ontario safe and healthy. I'm looking forward, this Friday, to spending some time with the public health nurses in Toronto and to having a conversation about nursing advocacy.

DUTCH-CANADIAN FRIENDSHIP TULIP GARDEN

Mr. Victor Fedeli: This Saturday, I'm really looking forward to helping the North Bay Heritage Gardeners celebrate the blooming of their 70th-anniversary Dutch-Canadian Friendship Tulip Garden at the waterfront in North Bay.

Last fall, the North Bay Heritage Gardeners were one of more than 400 applicants selected by the Canadian Garden Council to participate in the program. Local veterans, school children and the public are being invited to attend a brief blooming ceremony officiated by my very good friend Harriet Madigan.

The ceremony will recount the history of the enduring friendship between Canada and the Netherlands that was forever solidified in the spring of 1946, when 100,000 tulips bloomed in Ottawa. Planted the previous fall, the Dutch tulip bulbs were sent to Canadians as a symbol of appreciation for the role Canadian soldiers played in the liberation of the Netherlands and the hospitality Canada provided to the Dutch royal family in Ottawa during World War II. Now a gift in perpetuity, Canada continues to receive 20,000 tulip bulbs every fall, the blooms of which are enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people every spring during the Canadian Tulip Festival.

My congratulations go out to all of the hard-working volunteers with the North Bay Heritage Gardeners for their commitment to making this a reality and continually beautifying our waterfront.

SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILDREN

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my privilege to rise today to talk about the unmet needs of special-needs children, including those with autism, in the province of Ontario.

Yesterday, Ontario's independent advocate for children and youth, Irwin Elman, released a report called *We Have Something to Say*. This is a groundbreaking report and one that every MPP needs to sit down, read and think about.

The report was two years in the making, and it put the voices of youth with disabilities front and centre—170 submissions from young people who told their stories about how they aren't heard and the obstacles they face on a daily basis.

In an interview with Queen's Park Briefing, Mr. Elman said about the autism therapy wait-list, "It's a mug's game. Maybe it's better to get \$8,000 than have nothing, but don't pretend it's a solution to anything. Don't pretend this is about the child and providing them with what they need...."

"If it really was child-focused—about getting these children what they need and these parents the help that they need—then you would be looking at the school system. Where is the partnership between the Ministry of Education and the ministry of child and family services...."

"What do you expect" these "parents to do? We should thank them for being so fierce and supporting their children."

He's right: We should thank those parents, dozens of whom came to my office last week. One parent said, "The minister wants to listen to them, but how will she be able to listen to those kids who have been denied IBI therapy, who will never speak?"

While this government has not yet decided to listen to parents and children with autism, our provincial advocate has published a report that does give them, and children with disabilities, a voice. For that, we thank him.

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA HEART INSTITUTE

Mr. John Fraser: On this day in 1976, Dr. Wilbert Keon saw his vision come to life. The University of Ottawa Heart Institute is celebrating 40 years as a world-renowned heart health centre. Its advances in genetics and applications, such as the STEMI protocol, have had an impact worldwide.

The heart institute also runs Canada's largest prevention and rehabilitation program in cardiac medicine. Most importantly, it delivers critical services to families in Ottawa and eastern Ontario.

On a personal note, our family has been impacted directly by these service. Both my mother, Mary, and my

father-in-law, Lorne, received life-saving care at the heart institute and, as a result, are able to spend time with their great-grandchildren now. This is the experience of many families in eastern Ontario, and that is why the province is investing in a new heart institute, currently under construction.

To Dr. Keon, thank you for your vision, your ingenuity and your loyalty. Today would not have been possible without you. To Dr. Thierry Mesana and your team of dedicated doctors, nurses and health care professionals, thank you for caring for the people we care for most. A special thanks to all the volunteers and generous contributors who, over the years, have helped to build the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. We very much look forward to opening a brand new heart institute in 2018.

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WOMEN'S WORLD FLOORBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Todd Smith: Belleville welcomed the world last week, and in the end it was this close for Canada. The Women's World Floorball Championships for group B came down to Canada and Germany in the final game at the Yardmen Arena on Sunday. The tournament saw teams, families and fans from 15 different countries housed and fed and cheering on their teams in Belleville.

Organizers like Brett Davis and his wife, Tracey, and Rosi Ouellette brought dozens, if not hundreds, of volunteers to stage a week-long tournament that showcased the best of the city of Belleville and the best of the sport of floorball, which is a relatively new sport here in North America.

At the end of the day, the defending champs from Sweden won the tourney, but the tournament was a huge success. They set new attendance records, selling more than 15,800 tickets for the 33 matches. They set a single-game record when 3,151 people packed the Yardmen for the tourney's first game, between Canada and Japan. This was three years of hard work by the organizing committee, and thankfully they got a great storyline.

Led by local stars like Hannah Wilson and Alexa Hoskin of Belleville and goalie Madi Brinklow of Tyendinaga township, and coached by Belleville boy Todd Crawford, Team Canada made it all the way to the gold-medal game in group B. They were down 5-3 late in the third period. They scored two goals in 20 seconds to tie it up; the roof just about blew off the place. Then a Canadian defender was pushed into the Canadian goaltender, and the Germans scored with 30 seconds left to steal it away from Canada.

But man, was it excitement. And it was a tremendous show for the city of Belleville, as they were ready to welcome the world. Great job to all involved.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You should have been an announcer.

Mr. Norm Miller: He was.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know.

MAPLEFEST

Mr. Granville Anderson: That's a great act to follow.

Last Saturday, I was delighted to attend the annual maple festival in Bowmanville. Every year, on the first Saturday of May, hundreds of people from all over the GTA come to my riding to explore Maplefest, which takes place in historic downtown Bowmanville. At Maplefest, local vendors from all over Ontario come to Bowmanville to sell their products, such as maple syrup, homemade jam, fudge, maple doughnuts and many other types of treats.

I attend this event every year. However, I was extremely pleased to hear the positive feedback about the work my office and our government have been doing in the great riding of Durham. Of course, I was happy to listen to any feedback and gather opinions from so many local residents.

I will take this moment to thank all the local vendors and volunteers who came together to ensure that Maplefest was a success, and I'm looking forward to next year's event.

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS SUMMIT

Mr. Mike Colle: On Monday, at Mount Sinai Hospital just down the street, I will be proud to be part of a summit on pregnancy and infant loss. It's the first of its kind in North America, where renowned scientists, nurses, nurse practitioners, mothers who have lost children, and researchers will come from Quebec, the UK and the United States, basically to find out why every year over 30,000 Ontario women lose their infants as a result of miscarriage, stillbirth or early childhood death.

We have to know why these deaths occur every year, what causes them and what we can do to prevent these 30,000 losses every single year in this province. I hope that out of this summit we will get better health care for all of these women who suffer this tragic loss psychologically and physiologically without any help. Many of these women are forced to go back to work within a week of losing a child. That is not right. We need to stand up and make sure that the right compassionate care is given to these mothers who lose children every year in this province.

I look forward to seeing this summit be a great success on Monday at Mount Sinai Hospital.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

"Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can't afford to pay more;

"Whereas Ontario's businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

"Whereas the recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

"Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff ... contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

I have affixed my signature as well.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that has been signed by 2,160 people. They were collected by the nurses from Hamilton who are here today. It reads as follows:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses ... and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;"

Therefore, they "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Julia to bring to the Clerk.

TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: J'aimerais apporter une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

« Attendu qu'il y a un besoin criant en infrastructure de transport routier dans la province de l'Ontario;

« Attendu que d'offrir différentes alternatives ou options dans le choix du mode de transport aux citoyens aide à réduire le nombre de voitures sur les routes;

« Attendu que les transports en commun contribuent à améliorer la qualité de vie des Ontariens ainsi qu'à préserver l'environnement;

« Attendu que les résidents d'Orléans et de l'est d'Ottawa ont besoin d'une plus grande infrastructure de transport;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Soutenir le plan Faire progresser l'Ontario et la construction de la phase II du train léger sur rail (TLR), ce qui contribuera à répondre aux besoins criants en infrastructure de transport à Orléans, à l'est d'Ottawa et à travers la province. »

Il me fait plaisir d'inscrire ma signature et la remettre à la page Claire.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs;

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“Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

“Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

“Whereas freezing student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind; and

“Whereas this situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential.”

I agree with this petition, sign it and pass it to page Laura.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled “Ontario Needs to Fund Family-Created Housing.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government’s 2014 budget included a commitment to address the wait-list of more than 12,000 adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding, and some of whom have been waiting more than 20 years; and

“Whereas since the spring of 2014 the number of adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding has grown to more than 14,000; and

“Whereas there is currently no available funding to plan for a respectful transition from the family home to a home of choice in the community; and

“Whereas more than 1,450 Ontario parents over the age of 70 continue to provide primary care to their adult child; and

“Whereas currently adults with developmental disability must go on the crisis list before they receive residential funding, often resulting in a loss of choice, dignity and community; and

“Whereas family-created housing prioritizes dignity, choice and community inclusion for the resident living with disability as well as providing long-term cost savings for the province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Community and Social Services to address the growing wait-list for adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding and provide stable funding opportunities for family-created housing.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Leah.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: “Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

“Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a decent work agenda by making sure that Ontario’s labour and employment laws:

“—require all workers be entitled to a starting wage that reflects a uniform, provincial minimum, regardless of a worker’s age, job or sector of employment;

“—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

“—ensure part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time, permanent counterparts;

“—provide at least seven ... days of paid sick leave each year;

“—support job security for workers when companies or contracts change ownership;

“—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temp agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

“—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

“—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

“—offer proactive enforcement of laws, supported by adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the law;

“—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

“—ensure all workers are paid at least \$15 an hour.”

I agree with this petition and I will hand it over to page Marthangi.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontarians rely on ServiceOntario locations to access public services such as health cards, vital statistics and land registry services;

“Whereas Ontarians in rural areas are unable to drive long distances to an alternative ServiceOntario location;

“Whereas the duty of government is to provide and preserve its ability to provide services to the public;

“Whereas the planned closure of nine ServiceOntario locations, including Morrisburg, is an affront to Ontarians’ right to receive the public services they helped build with their hard-earned tax dollars;

“Whereas the displacement of land registry offices will create additional costs to the public as legal professionals and municipal officials will have to travel outside their township;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To halt the closure of nine public ServiceOntario locations, including Morrisburg, unless the continued local in-person delivery of ServiceOntario services in those communities can be guaranteed.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Laura.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government has cancelled the Northlander passenger train which served the residents of northeastern Ontario; and

“Whereas the provincial government has closed bus stations and is cancelling bus routes despite promising enhanced bus services to replace the train; and

“Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) has been given a mandate that its motor coach division must be self-sustaining; and

“Whereas Metrolinx, the crown corporation that provides train and bus service in the GTA” of Toronto “is subsidized by more than \$100 million annually; and

“Whereas the subsidy to Metrolinx has increased annually for the last seven years;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To direct the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to reverse the decision to cancel bus routes immediately and to treat northerners equitably in decisions regarding public transportation.”

I wholeheartedly agree and hand it to page Leah.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here that I believe very much in supporting: “Supporting Transparency of Wait-Lists and the Banning of Non-Refundable Daycare Wait-List Fees in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many parents and caregivers are being charged non-refundable fees to place their children on wait-lists for daycare centres;

“Whereas non-refundable daycare wait-list fees can range from tens to hundreds of dollars;

“Whereas due to the scarcity of quality daycare spaces, many parents and caregivers are forced to place their children on multiple wait-lists;

“Whereas non-refundable daycare wait-list fees impose a significant financial burden on parents and caregivers for the mere opportunity to access quality child care;

“Whereas daycare wait-lists are often administered in a non-transparent manner which creates the risk that they will be administered in an unfair and/or discriminatory manner;

“Whereas parents and caregivers in Ontario already face significant barriers accessing daycare due to high costs and limited numbers of daycare spaces;...

“Whereas there are currently no regulations in place to prevent daycares from charging parents and caregivers exploitative fees;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize that we have a responsibility to take action now, and support a requirement for transparent administration of daycare wait-lists and a ban on non-refundable daycare wait-list fees.”

I assign my name to this and leave it with page Isabela.

HOME CARE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have petitions signed from Parry Sound in support of personal support workers—the VON in Parry Sound. It reads:

“Whereas home care should be patient-centred and the priority is direct care, not profit; and

“Whereas the privatization of health services has led to the delivery of services that have become profit-driven rather than care-driven;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that home care be guided by the principle of caring for patients first, without regard for private profit-making.”

I sign this and will give it to Marthangi.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition, and I want to thank Mrs. Rollande Tanguay from Wahnapiatae in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Ayana to bring it to the Clerk.

APRAXIA

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all children in the province of Ontario deserve every opportunity to reach their full potential; and

“Whereas speech and language pathologists in Ontario are afforded the capabilities to provide a diagnosis of childhood apraxia of speech and receive specialized mandated training; and

“Whereas intensive and frequent individualized professional speech therapy, multiple times weekly, is needed to facilitate verbal speech; and

“Whereas school-aged children with severe and significant speech and language disorders like childhood apraxia of speech are not receiving the quality or quantity

of speech therapy outlined as essential by current evidence and research, by either CCACs or school boards; 1530

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government of Ontario to declare that May 14 is Apraxia Awareness Day.”

I totally agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with Alfred.

PRIX DE L’ESSENCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was given to me by Diane Girard from Hanmer, in my riding. It reads as follows:

« Alors que les automobilistes du nord de l’Ontario continuent d’être soumis à des fluctuations marquées dans le prix de l’essence; et

« Alors que la province pourrait éliminer les prix abusifs et opportunistes et offrir des prix justes, stables et prévisibles; et

« Alors que cinq provinces et de nombreux états américains ont déjà une réglementation des prix d’essence; et

« Considérant que les juridictions qui réglementent le prix de l’essence ont : moins de fluctuations des prix, moins d’écarts de prix entre les communautés urbaines et rurales et des prix d’essence annualisés inférieurs; »

Ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« D’accorder à la Commission de l’énergie de l’Ontario le mandat de surveiller le prix de l’essence partout en Ontario afin de réduire la volatilité des prix et les différences de prix régionales, tout en encourageant la concurrence. »

J’appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer, et je demande à Ayana de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

VISITORS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I move on to orders of the day, I’d like to welcome the nurses from Hamilton and their contingent.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION
AND LOW-CARBON ECONOMY
ACT, 2016LOI DE 2016 SUR L’ATTÉNUATION
DU CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE
ET UNE ÉCONOMIE SOBRE EN CARBONE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 10, 2016, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas / Projet de loi 172, Loi concernant les gaz à effet de serre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I look forward to the next hour, to position the PCs' thoughts on how this is a very serious discussion that needs to be had. We want to thoughtfully put forward our concerns in a professional manner that, hopefully, this government will take to heart.

First of all, I want to show my appreciation to my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. He spent a number of hours with me in general government addressing Bill 172. From stakeholders through to the actual proof, we've seen many people express concern over the manner in which this particular piece of legislation was rushed. We witnessed and entertained over 70 amendments, which is almost unprecedented, put forward by this government to fix their legislation in committee. It's just a proof-point that this legislation is flawed. Like so many stakeholders have asked and continue to ask to this day, we would like to see this government hit the pause button, get it right and actually do proper consultation so that we don't have the negative financial costs and burden laid on the shoulders of Ontario taxpayers.

Of course, Speaker, you know, everyone in the House knows and Ontarians know, as well, that climate change is one of the most important issues facing our province. The PC Party of Ontario has long maintained that the government needs to develop a credible plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, all the while protecting taxpayers and our economy. We've said right from the very beginning that we can't afford to get it wrong on such an important issue. By what we're seeing in reports in papers today, there are even members of the Liberal cabinet voicing their concerns over the direction this minister is taking this province in terms of the financial burden that a cap-and-trade scheme will generate as they move forward to make their slush-fund dream a reality.

We have to be real here. I ask everyone in this House to join with me and accept reality: The Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme will not effectively tackle climate change.

I just shared with my colleague from Nipissing some information from Aldyen Donnelly. She is a greenhouse gas emissions expert. She has been tracking this for years. She has been in the industry for years. She has given data just today. Source her on Twitter. She's posted data that shows that since the early 2000s, greenhouse gas emissions truly haven't been reduced dramatically in that particular state. The fact that we are fashioning a cap-and-trade cash grab tax scheme after a state where actually just today we've seen more proof that it hasn't properly tackled its greenhouse gas emissions issue—I would suggest that this Liberal government has got it completely wrong.

So I repeat: Unfortunately, the Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme will not effectively tackle climate change, as we've seen the proof-point today from California. The Liberals' approach to generating their slush fund, if you will, will only make life more complicated and less affordable for Ontarians, and increase the cost of doing business in our province. I'm disappointed to say that my remarks over the next hour will mainly focus on the

major flaws of Bill 172, and there are many of them. So maybe we'll have some exercise today, but here we go.

Unfortunately, without reason, the government rejected every single one of our party's thoughtful amendments to this proposed legislation, which my colleague and friend from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry would attest to. Most importantly, we had hoped the government would support essential amendments to improve accountability and provide tax relief. That's what we need in Ontario. But each and every Liberal member of the committee voted against fairness for taxpayers, against transparency and against accountability. Speaker, all I have to say is: Shame on this government. The rejection, over and over again, of these amendments to strengthen oversight shows just how arrogant the Liberals have become.

Let's not forget that this Liberal government is under five—count them, Speaker—five separate OPP investigations. The Liberals are being investigated for bribery, fraud and the destruction of evidence, not to mention that this summer the former chief of staff and deputy chief of staff for the McGuinty Liberal government will stand trial. They're going to stand trial to face several charges related to the Liberals' politically motivated decision to waste \$1.1 billion of Ontarians' money, cancelling two gas plants just to save a handful of Liberal seats in the last election.

These two senior McGuinty Liberal aides are facing serious charges. They include breach of trust, mischief and misuse of a computer system to commit mischief. They stand accused of orchestrating the systematic destruction of documents and emails related to the Liberals' gas plant scandal. This Liberal government's arrogance and contempt for our democratic institutions is something that should be deeply troubling to every single person in this province. When Ontarians watch the government setting up a cap-and-trade slush fund, they know that they can't trust a government under five OPP investigations with a \$1.9-billion secretive slush fund.

There's so much potential for abuse with the Liberals' cap-and-trade slush fund that it's probably just a matter of time until we have a sixth OPP investigation. Again, I'd like to remind everyone that the history of the European Union and Europe's emissions trading scheme has been fraught with fraud.

Speaker, no one in this province believes this government anymore, and no one trusts the Liberals with their hard-earned money. What's worse, Speaker, is that Ontarians are starting to lose faith—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order. The member from Ottawa-Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would just like to know what, exactly, is the relevance of this debate to Bill 172, our climate change act. I would ask the Speaker to maybe ask the member to refer back to our bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member is correct on one point, but part of her discussion was in reference to the comment she's made as related to the industry, in reference to cap-and-trade when she talked

about the gas plants, which is part of the energy project. When she strays from that and gets into other things, I will let her know.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. Again, just to repeat, no one trusts the Liberals with their hard-earned money. What's worse, Ontarians are starting to lose faith in our democratic institutions because they've been so thoroughly abused by the Liberals for such a long period of time.

Although we've brought forward many thoughtful amendments over the last couple of weeks that would have addressed some of these issues, the government literally brushed off all of our concerns and they introduced, as I said, an almost unprecedented 70 amendments to their own bill.

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What's worse is, while we have been performing our due diligence by carefully reviewing this massive taxation scheme, the government attempted to derail our amendments by accusing our party of delaying the legislative process. I'm disappointed by these actions, but I can't say I'm surprised. We all know that the Liberals welcome any legislation that will increase or create just about any tax to finance their massive spending sprees. Remember the Liberal health tax? Or the Liberal eco tax? Or what about the Liberal harmonized sales tax? The list just goes on and on, tax after tax after tax. These Liberals can come up with just about any excuse to justify a new tax. This carbon tax is just the latest ploy to rake in even more money to spend on Liberal pet projects and reward Liberal insiders.

It's shameful that the cost of the Premier's mismanagement will continue to fall on Ontario taxpayers, families and businesses, and it is very discouraging that this government arrogantly assumes that the public supports every one of their actions when all the evidence shows the opposite. But we can talk about that in a little bit more depth in a few minutes.

Let's talk about the committee process. Some of the more specific problems with this legislation are something I'd like to dive into a little bit deeper, and I'd like to talk about the government's complete disregard for stakeholder and opposition concerns during the committee process.

We learned very quickly in committee that if there was ever a piece of legislation that the Liberal government should not rush, it's Bill 172. During deputations, for instance, we listened to thoughtful comments from environmental groups, industry leaders, cap-and-trade experts, and public servants who all expressed concerns about the rushed Liberal cap-and-trade scheme. These concerns ranged from the threat of job losses and compliance issues to shutting investment out of the province and driving out investments by companies looking for a break. We all on this side of the House, I'm sure, can point to specific examples within our riding of companies exiting not only our riding but the province because

they've been enticed via cheaper electricity, better building conditions and tax breaks in the States. Many groups pointed out that this legislation simply risks increasing the cost of doing business in Ontario, imposing another massive taxation scheme on the public.

For a fleeting moment, it actually seemed like the government might be listening to these comments. Despite the almost unprecedented number of amendments submitted by the government, it became immediately clear that very few of these amendments addressed the concerns of taxpayers or businesses. Most troubling, there was very little acknowledgement about the gross lack of transparency and accountability in this bill. Instead, the government's amendments mainly addressed issues that could have been and should have been resolved before the bill ever reached the committee stage.

This was only one of many indications that the government hadn't performed its due diligence before introducing this bill and had rushed to find a band-aid solution to their overzealousness. Don't worry: I'll be pointing out all of these instances throughout my remarks. There was a common concern, however, over Bill 172, as I said, being rushed.

Everyone knows that the Premier slapped the cap-and-trade bill together so she had a PR document before jetting off to Vancouver for a photo op with the Prime Minister. Ontarians are concerned that the government brought forward an almost unprecedented number of amendments in committee in an attempt to clean up the Premier's mess. Our party was naturally curious about why the government had introduced so many amendments, and questioned government lawyers and officials about these modifications. Unfortunately, we never got many straight answers in committee. My colleague from eastern Ontario will recall that on multiple occasions the Liberals muzzled ministry lawyers and officials in front of the entire committee in a desperate effort to silence civil servants from speaking out.

After witnessing the Liberals muzzle these officials, it became quite clear that the orders to silence ministry staff came right from the Premier's office. The Premier's cap-and-trade bill has become such an unmitigated disaster that the Liberals' only solution is to hide the mess from Ontarians.

Witnessing this abuse of power was more than alarming. In a prosperous and free country like Canada, the government should never obstruct an all-party review of any legislation, and it should never even think of muzzling government officials and shutting down the democratic process. But that's exactly what the Liberals did. This is shameful, arrogant behaviour, and I would dare say that Ontarians are taking note. It goes without saying that Ontarians expect their elected representatives to carefully vet government bills, especially bills that will dramatically increase the cost of living and doing business in Ontario.

On this side of the House, as the loyal opposition, we take this responsibility very seriously. Our role as Her Majesty's loyal opposition is to hold the government to

account and to point out flaws with the legislation—which, as I highlighted, are rampant throughout the entirety of Bill 172.

The committee process revealed serious concerns around transparency and accountability. Most troubling—we heard about it earlier today during question period—the Financial Accountability Officer, who had never testified in committee before Bill 172, stated that he was becoming increasingly concerned about the lack of government transparency, and he warned that he would likely be unable to access government documents describing how the cap-and-trade revenue would be spent. That means that the Liberals could decide, under the cloak of cabinet secrecy, which companies and organizations would benefit from the government's \$1.9-billion slush fund.

Given this government's history of being under serious criminal investigation, it seems absolutely ludicrous to hand the government even more money to throw away on pet projects managed by their buddies whereby they continue to choose winners and losers throughout Ontario.

Ontarians deserve to know how their hard-earned taxpayer dollars are being spent, especially since nearly half of their income goes to taxes already.

Speaker, every single Ontarian has the right to be upset that the Liberals are stonewalling the Legislature's independent officers and are hiding spending plans that will waste billions of their hard-earned tax dollars.

Our caucus moved a critically important amendment in committee based on the Financial Accountability Officer's comments. We put forward an amendment to require the government to disclose each and every spending plan using cap-and-trade funds. It was a simple but powerful amendment. It would have shared accountability. But guess what, Speaker? The member from Beaches–East York and his Liberal colleagues voted against accountability, voted against transparency and voted down our sensible, thoughtful amendment.

The Liberals' refusal shows that the cap-and-trade scheme is not about the environment; it's about the money, plain and simple. The Liberals are setting up a Ponzi scheme that promises environmental returns, but in reality it will only generate billions of dollars for the government while shipping billions of more dollars that Ontarians strive so hard to make to California, as we heard earlier today.

Even more egregiously, however, the member for the Beaches–East York riding had the nerve to claim in committee that the Liberals had fixed this lack of transparency after allegedly consulting with Mr. LeClair, the Financial Accountability Officer. The member actually stated that, "From our discussions with the Financial Accountability Office, this is what they were looking for." But just yesterday, Speaker, this same member reiterated in the House that "we crafted a motion, with the assistance of the Financial Accountability Officer, that would satisfy his key objective to have all the information he required for decisions that we took."

Both of these statements are completely false. The Financial Accountability Officer was forced to draft a letter in response to set the record straight. In this letter, he specified that "the government did not consult me on the addition of the reporting requirement. The clause as adopted is not consistent with what I recommended to the committee in my testimony."

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The Financial Accountability Officer also addressed why the amendment didn't substantially address his concerns about transparency. As he explained, "A report published up to a year after the Treasury Board approves the initiative and which may not include relevant details contained in the original evaluation will do little to help me provide analysis to the Legislative Assembly concerning the financial impact of the proposed act and the initiatives funded by virtue of the act. As I explained to the committee, only routine disclosure of evaluations or at least, structuring the evaluations to allow the disclosure of background information they contain, would allow me to have access to the information that I need to provide the Legislative Assembly with this analysis."

Mr. LeClair called out the member for Beaches–East York for his comments. He said, "The member misrepresented my opinion and level of participation in the development of amendments to the bill. Furthermore, the member did not ask me whether the requirement was consistent with my recommendations."

This is unacceptable and shameful behaviour. The member for Beaches–East York clearly twisted the words of one of the independent officers of the Legislature in a sad and utterly pathetic attempt to distract from the Liberals' brazen unwillingness to take our concerns seriously about Bill 172's lack of transparency.

The government should issue an immediate apology, in writing, to the Financial Accountability Officer for their actions, and promise to uphold the integrity of his office in the future.

Speaker, I hope the members sitting opposite have taken my advice to heart. In no way should an independent officer's comments or report ever be taken out of context to serve their own individual purpose, and I hope that they truly apologize.

As we go on, more than just the Financial Accountability Officer have spoken out against this rushed piece of legislation that does nothing but prove that this Liberal government can't get their hands on more Ontario tax dollars as fast as they can—I can see them; they're salivating. They can't wait. They've even booked 330 million of cap-and-trade slush fund dollars in this particular current fiscal year, after which they're going to be earning \$1.9 billion in 2017.

It's interesting when we reflect on other people who have concerns. At this time, I want to share comments and concerns offered by former Liberal finance minister Greg Sorbara. He expressed serious reservations about the Liberal cap-and-trade scheme. While chatting with Steve Paikin on The Agenda, Mr. Sorbara stated that once the government sells its imaginary product called

carbon credits, it will raise prices for virtually every product that Ontarians buy. Again, I'm going to repeat that. Mr. Sorbara stated on The Agenda that once the government sells its imaginary product called carbon credits, it will raise prices for virtually every product that Ontarians buy. It's no wonder cabinet ministers are very concerned about this. I hope they do the right thing and stand up for Ontarians and challenge the Premier and challenge the Minister of the Environment and cap-and-trade, behind their doors, in cabinet secrecy, to do the right thing.

As my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings said, "Members of the Liberal cabinet, we hope you haven't drunk that same Kool-Aid." We hope there's still time for you to stand up and challenge the Premier and challenge the Minister of the Environment and cap-and-trade to do the honourable thing.

When the prices of virtually everything go up, do you know what we're talking about? We're talking about higher prices for food, prescription drugs, renovating your home, buying that new car, just about everything. The bottom line is, once this carbon tax scheme starts, you'll pay more for practically everything you buy. That's not fair for Ontario businesses and, most important, it's not fair for our hard-working taxpayers.

This tax scheme will make life more unaffordable for each and every Ontarian, plain and simple. Again, you don't have to take my word for it. Just listen to what else Mr. Sorbara had to say: "Although the [finance] minister said there are no tax increases, the fact is that there's a \$1.9-billion increase. I call it a flow-through tax that will ultimately affect consumers.... It's an interesting way to raise money while saying, at the same time, you're not raising taxes."

In other words, the Liberals are speaking out of both sides of their mouths. They somehow have the audacity to claim they won't raise taxes while selling a tax scheme to fleece taxpayers for \$1.9 billion. A scam of this magnitude would make even Bernie Madoff blush. But what do you expect when the government is peddling a scheme championed by Enron?

Speaker, I have to ask, is it really any wonder why no one in this province believes a word this Liberal government says? Not even Mr. Sorbara believes this government. In fact, he called out his own party for moving forward with a cap-and-trade scheme, saying, "There's no evidence, anywhere in the world, that the cap-and-trade system actually does work ... to significantly reduce carbon emissions. Until I see that evidence, I have to be a little bit skeptical about the whole scheme—other than it's going to bring ... a lot of new money into the government."

And there's the crux of the whole matter: This cap-and-trade scheme, this slush fund, is going to do nothing but bring a whole lot of money to this cash-strapped government. There's no way, after all of their mismanagement over the last 13 years, that we can ever trust them to get it right.

As I mentioned earlier, check out Aldyen Donnelly on Twitter. She just released data today that shows that Cali-

fornia's greenhouse gas emissions have not significantly gone down since the early 2000s. Their cap-and-trade scheme has not been effective. But they stand to make a lot of money—a lot of Canadian dollars—especially when our dollars, to the tune of \$300 million in the first couple of years and up to \$3 billion 10 years from now, will be flowing to California because that's where the free credits or allowances are.

If senior members of the Liberal Party don't even agree, they should stand up and, as I said, do the honourable thing: help this government get back on track, help this government realize that the direction their government, their party, is taking on the issue is wrong and that the public is rightly concerned.

Speaker, everyone should hold a particularly dim view of the government's obstructionist policies during committee. We're particularly proud of the diligent work we undertook as opposition in the committee, and that we will be able to tell future generations of Ontarians that our party, the PC Party of Ontario, took every opportunity to question the government about this massive taxation scheme before it became law. Unfortunately, however, the public seems to be growing accustomed to this government increasing the cost of doing business in our province, making life less affordable for Ontarians. One example would be the hydro costs and the impact of cap-and-trade on hydro.

Speaking of bankrupting future generations of Ontarians and leaving our seniors out in the cold, I'd just like to take a few minutes to discuss the state of hydro prices in Ontario under the failed energy policies of this Liberal government. After all, energy consumption is intimately linked to greenhouse gas emissions.

As recently as last week, Ontario ratepayers saw yet another hike in electricity rates. This wasn't because the public is using more energy. In fact, families and businesses were charged more because they had consumed less over the winter months. Yes, you heard it right: They were charged more for using less. It almost seems like a statement from a parallel universe—but so does a Liberal government pretending to be accountable while it's under five criminal investigations. It all just doesn't really make any sense. That's why Ontarians are so frustrated with the state of politics in this province.

Unfortunately, by the government's own admission, its failed policies have now left 570,000 households living in energy poverty. That means that more than half a million homes in Ontario can't afford to properly heat their homes in the winter and keep their homes reasonably cool in the summer. Like our finance critic has said time and time again, bad Liberal decisions are forcing Ontarians who work so hard to maintain a wonderful quality of life to choose between heating and eating. It's absolutely disheartening, because all of the skyrocketing cost of electricity has happened since the Liberals formed government in 2003.

1600

Even worse, we know that Ontarians aren't being fairly billed for their hydro. Last year, the Auditor Gen-

eral reported that Ontarians had overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion between 2006 and 2014. Ontarians will continue to be overcharged, according to the Auditor General, by another \$133 billion by 2032. That's exactly the kind of fiasco that occurs when governments don't listen to the experts and push through legislation like the Green Energy Act without consideration of its long-term impacts.

Despite the outcry from residential, commercial and industrial ratepayers, the Liberal cap-and-trade scheme will, once again, raise the cost of the natural gas component of our power supply, which will be reflected on our hydro bills. By 2025, some analysts believe gasoline costs will increase by \$400 a year and natural gas costs will increase by \$475 annually. In total, household energy bills, including electricity, gasoline and natural gas, could increase by \$1,500 a year in addition to the existing scheduled increases for electricity. Speaker, Ontarians can't afford this.

For instance, for a medium-sized business, analysts are projecting increases in natural gas and electricity costs ranging from \$120,000 to \$1 million.

Speaker, how many more Ontario households will be driven into energy poverty from these increases? How many more businesses won't be able to absorb the increased energy and compliance costs or will be put at a competitive disadvantage to our trading partners? I've spoken to businesses in Huron-Bruce, and they are dipping into their savings. Convenience store owners and grocery store owners both are dipping into their savings to pay their bills. It's not right. The margins have decreased to such a rate that there are very serious discussions about shutting down business. Yet again, what will the Liberals' record show? They consistently drive investment and business out of Ontario. We've been hearing about the exorbitant cost of doing business in Ontario for the past decade.

These changes that have been proposed through Bill 172 will only make things worse. Unfortunately, we have very little knowledge about the long-term costs of Bill 172 because, you guessed it, Speaker, the Liberal government continues to hide the long-term costs associated with this massive taxation scheme. They know the numbers; they're not showing them.

Let's talk about the gap in projected emissions. Speaker, I would suggest to you that this government hasn't been keen to admit that they have set Ontario's emissions target for 2020 at 150 megatonnes, even though the province's emissions are expected to reach 168 megatonnes. Yes, you heard those numbers correctly. That means there is a gap of 18 megatonnes between the government's arbitrary target and the experts' realistic projections about Ontarians' greenhouse gas emissions.

As the Liberals know, Ontario emitters would have to purchase 11.5 megatonnes of allowances from the Western Climate Initiative partners to meet our 2020 and 2030 targets. What does that translate into? Canadian dollars heading south. That means an estimated 200 million in Ontario taxpayer dollars will be flowing out of

our province each year to compensate for the Liberals' unattainable targets. Speaker, only a province with a government that believes Ontario's nuclear plants will be stranded assets in just 10 years could be sending 200 million tax dollars out of the province and deem it a good idea. This is complete and utter madness, but what do you expect from a government that has forced Ontarians to already overpay for electricity by \$37 billion? They think the supply of taxpayers' money is endless, but they've got a rude awakening coming for them. Ontarians are already having enough trouble making ends meet with the increasing costs of living.

So I ask you, why should Ontarians be funding governments and companies outside of our province, let alone our country, when we could spend this money on environmental upgrades and cleaner technologies right here in Ontario? Again, this is something that I want everyone to think about. Why should Ontario be forced into funding governments and companies, via the Western Climate Initiative, outside of our province instead of spending the money on environmental upgrades and cleaner technologies right here in Ontario?

Is this Liberal government selling out our province for financial gain? We know they're cash-strapped and we know they're desperate for money, so people can be the judge and answer for themselves.

This government has failed to explain why Ontario emitters should buy California carbon allowances when so many of these allowances are distributed for free to California emitters. Would these purchased credits represent meaningful emission reductions or meaningless paper proxies to line the pockets of investors looking to cash in on the latest Liberal scheme? Ontarians would obviously prefer to spend their money on green initiatives and environmental upgrades at home rather than waste their money funding projects outside of their home and country.

I feel the need to point out once again, Speaker, that Ontarians should not and, in many cases, cannot continue paying for this government's mismanagement and mistakes. We're not the only ones with these thoughts.

Mr. Duncan Rotherham, the expert adviser with ICF International, has pointed out that Ontarians' reliance on natural gas generation will increase due to the retirement of nuclear units and refurbishments of other nuclear units. We know what's happening with Pickering and we celebrate the commitments to refurbish both Darlington and Bruce Power. The fact of the matter is, this government has the audacity to keep pulling away at Ontario taxpayer dollars because they need the money to fund their mismanaged ways.

Speaker, when I take a look around the House today, I would suggest to you that we don't have a quorum, so I would like for you to review attendance and see if we have that. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I ask the Clerk to see if there is a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A quorum is present.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to backtrack a little bit and pick up where I left off. I want to point out that Ontarians should not and, in many cases, cannot continue paying for this government's mistakes, and we're not the only ones with these thoughts.

Mr. Duncan Rotherham, an expert adviser with ICF International, has pointed out that Ontario's reliance on natural gas generation will increase due to the retirement of nuclear units in Pickering and the refurbishment of other nuclear units at both Darlington and Bruce Power.

Due to these circumstances, he estimates that Ontario will miss its 2020 emission targets by eight to 10 megatonnes and miss its 2030 targets by 25 to 30 megatonnes. As I said, even more damaging, Mr. Rotherham believes that Ontario can't achieve its emission reduction targets through the Liberal's cap-and-trade scheme and that the initial price on carbon won't incentivize any shift in consumer behaviour. Again, it's only going to serve as a government tax grab.

Even if people buy electric cars, retrofit their homes and the trucking industry switches to natural gas, Ontario will still be 40 megatonnes short of reaching 37% below 1990 levels by 2030. You heard that correctly, Speaker: The Liberals won't even be able to meet their own targets.

Now, what's worse is that this government has included an absolute liability clause in this legislation. Subsection 54(10) says that a person must pay an administrative penalty if "(a) the person took all reasonable steps to prevent the contravention; or (b) at the time of the contravention, the person had an honest and reasonable belief in a mistaken set of facts that, if true, would have rendered the contravention innocent."

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Speaker, could you imagine? If you had a business that was about to be regulated under this proposed law, even you would do your best to comply. Even if you're honest, even if you took all reasonable steps, you'd be guilty.

To summarize: Experts have informed the government that Ontario will very likely not be able to meet any of its projected targets. Yet, this government has imposed a damaging clause that will punish businesses and families for not meeting their arbitrarily set caps. I should add that the Liberals casually dismissed this issue every time we raised it in committee.

Of course, these shortfalls leave a great deal of uncertainty for business and industry: What regulations and mandates will the government bring forward to address these gaps and reach their emission targets? Will the price of carbon be subject to sudden increases to deal with the lagging emissions reductions? The simple answer is that we just don't know.

let's talk about the impact of the cap-and-trade scheme on the auto industry and the electric vehicle fiasco. I'm equally skeptical about whether the government will be transparent about how their cap-and-trade scheme will impact Ontario's auto sector, or even whether this government supports Ontario's auto industry at all.

Just recently, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change advised Ontarians to stop buying vehicles with internal combustion engines, a statement which I felt was disrespectful to our multi-billion-dollar auto sector, a core economic driver in Ontario. The minister demonstrated that same disrespect at a recent Economic Club meeting, when he spoke about his cap-and-trade scheme and unveiled his Climate Change Action Plan. Once again, Speaker, he demonstrated a complete lack of respect for one of Ontario's largest employers, and a lack of pragmatism about the future of the industry in our province.

I'll go into a little bit more detail: Minister Murray admitted that auto executives have informed him that that the Liberals' plan to have 1.7 million electric and hybrid cars in use by 2024 and to remove seven million gas-burning vehicles from the road by 2030 is not realistic. In response to this evidence, the minister claimed that the auto industry lacked courageous leadership.

Can you imagine, Speaker? The minister claimed that Ontario's auto industry lacked courageous leadership. How arrogant. I just can't believe the audacity of this particular minister because he proceeded to remind automakers that the Ontario government had bailed out the auto industry during the recession. He went on to conclude with confrontational statements about how the auto industry would have to either shape up or lose out to other industries.

Then, you might recall, he finally gave a half-hearted apology to the auto sector during his remarks yesterday, before patting himself on the back for his climate policies. That's not leadership; that's bullying. A my-way-or-the-highway attitude and veiled threats are not going to bring manufacturers to Ontario or spur innovation. Heavy-handed behaviour like this will simply drive industry out of the province. We've seen it before, and unfortunately, this government is going to continue that trend.

The Liberal government has obviously learned nothing from its previous mistakes. Here we have the heads of the automotive industry telling the minister that the goal of 1.7 million electric cars on the road in eight years is not feasible, yet, he doesn't listen. The government's own website states that there are currently just 5,800 electric vehicles in Ontario.

My question is: Who's informing the minister on this matter? They'd better get their act together. Where did he get the magic number of 1.7 million electric cars? Where are the reports showing that this plan is achievable?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: He made it up.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: As my colleague and friend from Nipissing said, possibly he made it up; he makes up a lot of other things, but we'll leave that aside for now.

because it's just not enough for him to throw this number out there and, basically, tell the auto manufacturers to make it so, number one—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I've listened carefully to the member for Huron–Bruce, but I think she made an unparliamentary comment, and I have to ask her to withdraw it.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Sorry I got you in trouble.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes.

Speaker, I would suggest to you that we have members of the government opposite and ministers who tend to twist what we hear to serve their own purposes. The response from the auto industry was clear and—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. Now I have to ask the government side to please come to order so that I can hear the member for Huron–Bruce.

The member for Huron–Bruce has the floor.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much.

Again, just listen to the auto industry. The response from it was clear and unequivocal. In an interview with the *Globe and Mail*, Mr. Volpe, president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association of Canada, stated that manufacturers will not make or sell 1.7 million electric cars for Canada by that date, and that the minister's plan would be a message to auto manufacturers that products with internal combustion engines are not welcome in the province.

Mr. Speaker, that's ridiculous. Mr. Volpe rightly pointed out that the auto sector is spending billions of dollars to make cars more fuel-efficient, and that this government is actively trying to attract new investment from automakers whose assembly plants in Ontario are under threat of closure. We talk about the automakers, but let's think about the supplier companies as well. Situated throughout all of Ontario, they are good-paying jobs for both small-town and rural Ontarians.

This government had better start critically thinking, and they need to start assessing the impact of some misguided comments, as well. I find it ironic that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change held up as an example an electric car manufacturer that has received \$4.9 billion in government subsidies while slighting Ontario's private auto sector. How ironic is that? Is this what the Liberals define as their Open for Business initiative?

Speaker, the PC party is not alone in our concerns that the proposed Liberal plan is unworkable. I'd like to quote an editorial from the *Globe and Mail*, which stated that "what Mr. Murray is working on sounds like a Leap Manifesto. It's not a plan to dramatically lower emissions while screwing up the economy as little as possible. It reads more like a blueprint to meddle as much as possible, to get government's hands on as many levers and in as many pockets as possible, with climate change as a pretext."

In that spirit, let's take a look at the economic impacts of cap-and-trade. This statement echoes a point I made

during the second reading debate that this cap-and-trade scheme by this Liberal government is a Trojan Horse under the banner of a market-driven solution. Once it opens up, it will be nothing more than a command-and-control economic scheme ushering in increased cost burdens and more government intervention. In short, the Liberals design the game, set the rules, select the players, appoint the officials and then go on to pick the winners and losers.

I worry, yet again, that the people on the losing end of this scheme will be Ontario taxpayers, like we've seen before, over and over. Obviously, the Liberal game is rigged, and those who stand to benefit are the Liberals and the companies with consultants who have close ties to this particular government. That's it. As I said before, the losers will be the people of Ontario.

What the Liberal government is proposing with Bill 172 and its climate change action plan is the complete reordering of our economy and the way of life in this province, and the basis for this plan appears to be, "I want to believe." Reading about the Liberals' climate change action plan is like reading the Leap Manifesto. It's so extreme that it will shut down our economy.

Time and again, this government has been entirely dismissive of the fact that they've increased our debt to over \$300 billion, and that Ontario is now the most indebted sub-sovereign borrower in the world. It's no wonder that many people are uneasy when they hear the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change make public statements like, "We have to energy retrofit every building we've ever built." He's ignoring that Bill 172 will increase the cost of everything at a time when many Ontarians are already struggling to make ends meet.

I'm going to say that again: Imagine how this government ordering private sector companies to build electric cars is evidence-based public policy.

1620

We need to go back and take a look at so much of what this government has done. To explain myself: We need evidence-based decision-making. That whole concept has been void on so many players through the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government. It's a travesty, really; it's an absolute travesty. Instead of basing decisions on solid evidence, we have a minister indulging in magical thinking.

The minister said that by 2050, 80% of residents will use public transit, walk or cycle to work. Again, I'll repeat that—and here's an example of magical thinking by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change: The minister said that by 2050, 80% of residents will use public transit, walk or cycle to work. I'd like to ask: When was the last time the minister loaded up a couple of toddlers on his bicycle and dropped them off at a baby-sitter's house before cycling to work? When was the last time that he was in rural Ontario to absolutely, subjectively evaluate that statement? It's just not a statement that can be based on evidence that it will actually work. Has he forgotten that Ontario actually extends beyond the GTA? A statement like that would give one cause to worry.

It's an interesting time. If Bill 172 pushes the price of carbon up to \$95 a tonne by 2030, the cost of electricity, heating, fuel and gasoline will make life unaffordable for Ontarians, especially outside of urban areas. We still need to heat our homes. We still need to use our stoves, our refrigerators, our washing machines. We still have to drive to get to work. These are not luxury items I'm talking about. They're the necessities of life to work and live in this province.

At \$95 per tonne of carbon, how can municipalities afford to keep the roads plowed in the winter? How do farmers run their equipment and raise livestock? Where are the reports that estimate what impact higher carbon values will have on the cost of food? It's a real worry.

We learned today that 10% of the total take-home pay of Ontarians goes to heat and to feed their families. If the cost of food continues to rise in tandem with electricity, it's going to be a snowball effect, and as we said, we are going to increase the poverty level in Ontario and it's all going to be on the backs of this particular Liberal government.

What checks and balances has the government put in place to prevent the fraudulent activities that have plagued the emissions trading system in Europe? The response to these questions and many others remain unanswered. Given the expansive scope of Bill 172, it is essential that the government promote realistic goals and listen to the advice of experts over magical thinking and special interest groups. We've all witnessed the dire consequences of the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, where the government ignored energy specialists and the laws of physics.

As I stated earlier, because of these poorly-thought-out schemes, Ontarians have overpaid by \$37 billion for electricity just between 2006 and 2014, and they'll end up overpaying yet another \$133 billion by 2032. These are just a few of the serious economic impacts Bill 172 could impose on Ontarians.

It's unbelievable that in response to our attempts to perform due diligence in committee, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change had the nerve to accuse the PCs of holding up Bill 172, and stated that it must be passed quickly because he had a self-imposed timeline to set up his tax scheme. That's really what it was all about.

As I mentioned earlier, they've booked \$330 million generated from probably the trial market that will be introduced in November. They need that money in order to balance the books.

Time and again, while they stand on their soapbox trying to be authentic, we know deep down this is just about the money. Deep down, the minister could be saying, "Show me the money."

There are so many concerns that have been expressed over the months and years. I was disappointed to hear the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change attempt to justify his efforts to ram this legislation through the House. Using alarmist language to discourage the close scrutiny of a bill is a discredit to the legislative process.

The minister is fully aware that Ontario's share of global emissions is only 0.38% and that spending a little extra time to ensure that Bill 172 would not impact the climate—it's staggering.

Even more troubling is the real motivation for this haste. By rushing through this complex emissions trading scheme, the government is planning to raise \$478 million in the years 2016 and 2017 and \$1.9 billion annually in 2017 and 2018 to finance their new slush fund. Yes, Speaker, as I suggested before, it always comes back to money.

My colleagues and I met with businesses and constituents to hear their concerns about Bill 172 and their views on a revenue-neutral system that would produce tangible environmental benefits in Ontario without bankrupting our economy and taxpayers. We also looked carefully at their lengthy comments submitted to the standing committee.

While I can't go into great detail on each submission, it's important that we highlight the inequities created by Bill 172 which, if left unaddressed, will force businesses and industry out of Ontario. We were pleased to see that many of the issues raised by our party during the second reading debate were reflected in stakeholder comments. Again, that reflects completely the fact that we work with stakeholders, we consult with stakeholders, and we're genuine in wanting to learn from them, unlike the party opposite.

We had the right analysis of Bill 172 and the foresight to pinpoint problems. I must add that if the government's attempt to expedite this bill were truly motivated by the need to quickly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it would have given due consideration to the advice given by many experts and businesses who weighed in on the issue.

It's interesting. When we were setting up the structure for review, our party, the PC Party of Ontario, asked for an extra day for deputations. The word back from the government opposite to me was, "Oh, who wants to talk about this?" Well, in actual fact, 49 individuals and companies wanted to come forward to express their comments on Bill 172. Instead, this government limited deputations to only 18 individuals, organizations and businesses. Is that democratic? Absolutely not. So I feel compelled to share some of the stakeholders' concerns.

One is wind power. We've heard time and again about the many problems with wind power, including reports from residents living near turbines of being plagued by a number of issues, such as dizziness, ringing in the ears and flickering.

You would hope that if the government was intent on making life more difficult for people in rural Ontario, there would be some reason to their logic. It shouldn't shock you to learn that the government's misguided wind policy is not, in fact, helping reduce emissions at all.

As the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers cautioned, wind energy with natural gas backup emits about 150 to 200 grams of carbon dioxide per kilowatt hour. At this point, I would like to remind the govern-

ment that nuclear energy produces essentially zero CO₂ emissions, yet we had a minister suggest that within 10 to 20 years, nuclear was going to be a stranded asset: absolutely ridiculous and magical thinking, again, on his part.

I'm very proud that my riding is home to Bruce Power, one of Ontario's largest nuclear reactors. Bruce Power is one of the primary economic drivers in my riding, providing well-paying, meaningful jobs to many people in my riding and beyond. Just last year, Bruce Power achieved record output for the site, producing over 30% of Ontario's electricity at 30% below the average cost of electricity.

Despite these indisputable facts, the government continues to recklessly rely on wind power. In fact, this government just recently awarded contracts for 300 megawatts of wind and is launching the next request for proposal for a further 600 megawatts. This leads me to wonder if urgent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is a priority of this government, why would it continue to invest in industrial wind turbines that produce emissions?

1630

Now, let's talk about timing. Timing was also a key consideration for many businesses and organizations. As we know, the government intends to move forward with their cap-and-trade scheme by January 1, 2017. That gives businesses approximately six months to adapt to industry and regulatory changes introduced through cap-and-trade.

As the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change has admitted, cap-and-trade is one of the most complex pieces of legislation ever introduced into the Legislature. Yet the government expects businesses to magically adapt to this complex framework in a span of months. As I've previously mentioned, it's clear that the government barely understands its own hastily drafted legislation, but it's expecting industry to quickly remodel their long-term plans to accommodate these onerous requirements.

The Ontario Energy Association, for instance, described how they will be under intense pressure to set up a framework that will allow regulated distributors to pass on carbon costs to consumers through their utility bills. That required change will take at least six months.

This is only one of many examples where industry will be forced to compensate for the government's lack of foresight when drafting this legislation and its disregard for business concerns. This is another reason why the PC caucus doesn't believe that this bill is ready to proceed through the House.

Allowances are another concern. We've heard that the government will gradually lower the allowance threshold over several decades, with the intention of dramatically reducing Ontario's global emissions. But what we haven't got any clear answers about is how the government will do that without harming Ontario's economy.

To close, I have to say, Speaker, that I've outlined a few of the significant issues that the PC Party of Ontario pinpointed during the amendment process in committee.

We're confident that we performed our due diligence by voicing Ontarians' concerns about this legislation. However, it should be clear from my remarks, and from my colleagues standing up in this third-reading debate as well, that we cannot support this bill as it moves forward. The PC Party of Ontario cannot prop up another massive taxation scheme that will only make life more expensive for Ontarians and difficult for business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to commend the member from Huron-Bruce on her hour. An hour is a long time to speak in this House. I actually didn't listen to the whole length of the comment because I had a committee meeting in between. The committee meeting started and stopped and I came back, and the member was still going.

Obviously, she's not happy with the bill. She brought up a few things that deserve a few questions from this side of the government.

In her remarks, she said the Minister of the Environment has said that by 2050, 80% of the residents of Ontario would use public transit, cycle or walk as their main mode of transportation. That's a lofty goal. I think the question needs to be asked: What about the residents of Ontario who won't be able to use public transportation, cycle or walk to work?

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I get a heckle, "We're going to renovate the house," but there are places in Ontario where it will never be feasible. There is no public transportation. In fact, this government has cut public transportation in many parts of Ontario. The same people heckle, "Well, you should fix your house." They're the same people who cut the train and who are cutting the buses, and then they say, "In a few short years everyone will be using public transportation to go to work." But they are cutting public transportation in parts of the province.

We all need to fight climate change. The question needs to be asked: What about the 20% who won't have these options? Where do they fit in this government's vision of Ontario? Or are they going to be thought about after the fact, after the damage—much as has happened in many parts of Ontario with solar farms, when the contractors didn't get paid because they forgot about putting that in the contracts—again, after the fact.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to have an opportunity to respond to the member from Huron-Bruce's opening debate on behalf of the official opposition. I want to thank her, to start, actually thank her for referencing me and my riding on numerous occasions in the course of her remarks, because quite frankly, those who are listening at home from my riding are so supportive of this legislation, and knowing that I'm getting the shout-out from the member opposite can only do me good in my community, so I appreciate those references.

I listened very attentively to the member for the balance of her hour and was struck by how little more I learned from her many hours of debate in the course of committee and the discussion and the endless filibustering she and the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry were doing. It just demonstrates that the hour shows this continuous disregard or unbelieving in the legislation we brought forward. We appreciate that. They're not there.

They want to push this revenue-neutral concept, which is really just a euphemism for—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We're doing questions and comments. I need to hear the member who has the floor, the member for Beaches–East York. But I did hear an unparliamentary comment that I have to ask the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to withdraw.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York can continue. I'll give you a few extra seconds to finish off.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker.

Revenue-neutral is strictly a euphemism for a fee-and-dividend system à la BC, and we know the BC government (a) is not getting the carbon reductions that they expect, and (b) in order to be successful, they would have to raise the value, the price and the tax on fuels to such an extraordinary level it would have a disproportionate impact.

What you do know: We are getting revenue-neutral, because every dollar that is raised in cap-and-trade will be spent for the benefit of all Ontarians in various projects that we will all benefit from, be it subsidization of electric vehicles, be it transit, renovation projects, getting people in northern communities to get their boats and motorcycles into four-stroke from two-stroke engines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member from Lanark—help me.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Frontenac.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you very much, Speaker.

It's a pleasure to see members of the committee on the Liberal side that were engaged in the amendment process on Bill 172. Just for the record, it should be stated that the Liberal members on the committee frustrated and prevented the opposition members from getting clarification from legal counsel on these amendments, which was requested by the opposition members.

As the minister said, the over 70 amendments were highly technical, highly detailed, and the government members—the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I believe, was Chair of that committee—actually prevented the opposition members from getting legal counsel on clarification.

I know the member for Beaches–East York knows everything about this bill and he cannot be edified any

further. However, I do want to bring attention to the other members, who aren't so knowledgeable as the member for Beaches–East York. I draw your attention to sections 37 through 56. If you haven't read those, everything in this bill is an absolute liability.

Let me read that for the members who aren't aware:

“A requirement that a person pay an administrative penalty applies even if,

(a) the person took all reasonable steps to prevent the contravention; or

(b) at the time of the contravention, the person had an honest and reasonable belief in a mistaken set of facts that, if true, would have rendered the contravention innocent.”

Administrative penalties are \$1 million under this act—absolute liability. I'll continue to say more about those sections in later comments and questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the leadoff speech given by the member for Huron–Bruce. She and I disagree on most of this stuff, but I have to say that she was in Paris for COP21 and was present. She wasn't wandering off. She may have done it in some off hours, but when the conference was on during the day, she was paying attention. Her analysis is different from mine but she takes the issue seriously.

I'll disagree with you more in my speech, but I know you don't approach it as something that's light, to be set aside, to be forgotten about.

1640

She raised some very good points, I thought, about what's going on in California. I'll be addressing that, because I think that there are questions that this government is going to have to come to grips with if we're actually going to have an effective climate plan. Carbon pricing can be a useful tool. In California, it's recognized that 15% of the climate targets that will be met will be met through the cap-and-trade mechanism. In other words, it's not the centre or the core of that jurisdiction's efforts. It's a piece of it.

I think this is the larger question for the government and, frankly, for Ontario as a whole. A cap-and-trade program can be useful as a tool to say to industry, to city planners and to developers that over the next decade or two decades, “There will be an inevitable increase in the cost of energy derived from fossil fuels, and if you're going to invest, go to another technology.” That's where it's useful.

But in terms of the kind of rapid change that's needed so that we, in fact, can ameliorate the speed of a changing climate, it's going to be outside this market mechanism. It's going to be a question of legislation, rules. It's going to be a question of investment. Those are the things that will actually drive the changes that we need. That is something that this House has to recognize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Back to two minutes for the member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: To the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane: I stand with you. Together,

many of us can suggest to the government opposite that there is amazing life and quality of life outside the GTHA. We deserve to be respected and we deserve to be part of the solution, and not cast out, and not cast upon, by ill-conceived, ill-informed policy influencers who, really, seemingly don't care about what happens outside of a particular radius. I thank you for your thoughtfulness and how well you represent your riding.

To the member from Beaches–East York, all I have to say is, once again, you have an opportunity to do the honourable thing: to apologize to the Financial Accountability Officer for twisting his words. I would think that your constituents that you referenced earlier would expect you to do the same.

To the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, thank you again for revisiting the absolute liability. This is something that hasn't really been spoken about but is a concern, because a business could be doing absolutely what they think is right, yet the cost and the repercussions could shut down their business. This is something that seemingly the members opposite who have formed government just don't care about.

To the member from Toronto–Danforth, I would like to say thank you for caring. I know that we agree to disagree, but you make a really good point. We have to get away from a market scheme that's going to do nothing but give an influx of cash to a cash-strapped government and start focusing on environmental solutions, adaptation—the list could go on and on. We need those environmental solutions that will ultimately impact, in a positive manner, climate change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 172 this afternoon.

"The near destruction of Fort McMurray last week by a fire ... sent almost 90,000 people fleeing for their lives." That's quite an extraordinary statement. It was part of a story that was published in the Toronto Star this morning under the headline, "Global Warming Seen as a Lit Match in Northern Forests." The article had this to say:

"Scientists have been warning for decades that climate change was a threat to the immense tracts of forest that ring the Northern Hemisphere, with rising temperatures, drying trees and earlier melting of snow contributing to a growing number of wildfires."

The writer went on to say, "In retrospect, it is clear that the northern Alberta town was particularly vulnerable as one of the largest human outposts in the boreal forest. But the destruction of patches of this forest by fire, as well as invasions by insects surviving warmer winters, has occurred throughout the hemisphere."

"In Russia, about 70 million acres burned in 2012, news statistics suggest, much of that in isolated areas of Siberia. Alaska, home to most of the boreal forest in the United States, had its second-largest fire season on record in 2015, with 768 fires burning more than five million acres."

"Global warming is suspected as a prime culprit in the rise of these fires. The warming is hitting northern regions especially hard: Temperatures are climbing faster there than for the Earth as a whole, snow cover is melting prematurely, and forests are drying out earlier than in the past."

Speaker, I think you get the drift. There is a change in the world climate that manifested itself in the events at Fort McMurray, which showed that climate change is not some distant threat. It's not something that is going to hold off for a few decades and visit itself upon our children and our grandchildren. That alone would be a terrible thing. But it is something that is now real, active and having an impact on our lives.

It speaks to the courage and the coolness of Albertans that so many were able to escape—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Stormont.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Speaker, I don't think we have a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Clerk, is a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, it speaks to the courage and the coolness of Albertans that so many were able to escape that fire, that conflagration, without injury. Video clips on YouTube from a dash cam showing trucks moving out through a rain of burning embers were extraordinary. I don't know about you, Speaker, but I was extraordinarily glad that I was not in that truck on which that cam was mounted, because if anything shows a vision of what hell would be like, that's what those people went through.

The reports last week on CBC's The National of those people who had fled the fires getting the support, getting the food, getting the shelter and getting the caring from their fellow Albertans were simply moving. I have to give the CBC credit; they did a really good job of reporting. But far more important, the people of Lac La Biche, the people of Edmonton, the people in Alberta who simply opened their doors wide and opened their hearts wide to look after their fellow Albertans was something that should inspire all of us.

Speaker, yesterday I was in Thunder Bay. I had an opportunity, as the energy critic, to talk to a number of groups and have a tour of the power plant in Thunder Bay. I had a chance to talk to Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler about the situation that First Nations are in in the Nishnawbe Aski—I'll just say NAN so I'm not doing any injustice to the proper title. I had an opportunity to talk to him about the problem in remote communities with diesel generation—the incredible cost, the environ-

mental impact—but also to talk about the impact of climate change on the north. He said that there were two very big issues that loomed large for those remote northern communities when it came to climate change.

The first was that so many of these communities are remote, in areas that are surrounded by muskeg, marsh and swamp, that really, it was winter roads that were the lifeline—the winter roads that they depended on to bring in fuel and supplies that would last them through the warmer months. Every year, those winter roads have become less and less safe and have lasted a shorter and shorter time. In fact, in the last few years, we had people die near Deer Lake reserve. People died working on those winter roads, plunged through the ice into lakes.

1650

That alone would be a huge problem for those communities at a risk to life and limb, but the other concern, and this was reinforced so powerfully by the experience at Fort McMurray, was the potential for fire. People in Fort McMurray had a road that they could get out on. It's much tougher if you're in the middle of the boreal forest and there isn't a road and you're dependent on boats or aircraft—fly-in communities. This is a real worry. For Grand Chief Fiddler, this was something that was a spectre that hung over northern and remote communities. For him, climate change was not a distant or trivial matter. It was substantial; it was real; it was today.

We're starting to see another shift in the state of the world's climate. On December 31 of last year, 2015, it was reported that temperatures at the North Pole were at around the freezing mark, 20 degrees Celsius above normal. That's deep in winter, at the North Pole, and you're already getting temperatures at around the freezing mark. That is an extraordinary shift. That isn't a few degrees here and there; this is another chapter.

That's something, Speaker, I wanted to bring to your attention and the attention of the other legislators in this House: For quite a few years, I think the mental model we've all had is that the world's temperature would increase slowly, just gradually going up an incline and we'd see the changes emerging around us as we went forward. Increasingly, I've heard scientists and read reports by scientists saying that the change is not this gradual, inclined slope upwards, but more like a step. You step up, and there's a plateau; you go up another step, and another plateau. So the potential for a very sharp change is there.

Think of it another way, another analogy of an earthquake: You get this huge pressure building up and building up and then, suddenly, there are shifts and you have a new reality. You get aftershocks and then pressure begins to build up again. That speaks to a world in which we're going to have a much tougher time adapting.

Already in the last decade we've seen rainstorms in southern Ontario that washed away roads and broke records. That was one stage. We've hit that stage—what was a 100-year storm back in the 20th century has now become a 10- and 20-year storm. It's very different. I think with what we're seeing with Fort McMurray and

what we've seen with the temperature rises in the Arctic, we're going to another stage. That speaks to the urgency for action.

As I said in my remarks at second reading, the NDP supports the use of cap-and-trade for climate action. I also said that cap-and-trade and, in fact, any carbon pricing mechanism—carbon tax, cap-and-trade or fee-and-dividend, take your pick—was inadequate on its own to address the climate crisis.

Carbon pricing is potentially a useful tool. I have to say, you can do it really badly and any value it has will be washed away, but potentially if it's done in a thoughtful way and incorporated into a larger program, yes, it can have some benefit, but it's not enough to solve the problems before us.

Speaker, we will be supporting this bill, but I think we in our party and all of those in this House need to do it with their eyes wide open.

I want to start by exploring the political problems that I think the minister is going to face. Some of them might have been on display in the debate and some of them have been on display in question period and in the media. The minister and the government that he works in are going to have some very difficult shoals to navigate, ones that he needs to address now rather than later.

Let's explore those political problems. I need to note right off the top that the minister did listen to some of the concerns of the NDP, and I want to give him and his political staff credit for actually taking a problem-solving approach. Did I get what I think this bill needs? No, it fell short. Did the minister move? Yes, he did, and that is useful. I will address, concretely, some of those matters as we get into this bill.

The problems that this minister will face: First off, there is no such thing as a conflict-free resolution to the climate change problem. Whatever you do—it doesn't matter what it is—if it is actually going to do something about the problem, it will bring you into conflict with one person or another, one population or another, one interest or another. It's as simple as that. If you're shifting away from the use of an industry—the fossil fuel industry—that generates hundreds of billions in revenue every year, that claims assets worth in the trillions, and you say, “No, you're not going to be making hundreds of billions a year. You're not going to be able to utilize those trillions of dollars of assets,” right off the top, you will come into conflict with those interests.

Given that reality, it is critical for climate action to have the broadest possible popular support. To do that—and we've said this a number of times, going way back to May of last year, when there was first discussion about cap-and-trade—any bill that comes forward has to be fair, has to be transparent and has to be effective. Those three principles are critical to ensuring that there's popular support. If you don't have them, the whole thing will be simply swept away. Given that reality, the minister has to think about how to marshal support. Ministers come and go. The Minister of the Environment, whoever that will be this year and in the years to come,

has to always think about, "How do I bring along the majority of the population to act?"

I have to say that the bill, as written, is not fair. It needs to be fair. Some steps were taken, but it is not fair, and that is going to have to change. Too many Ontarians have seen their incomes stagnate or drop over the last few decades. If they come to believe that this bill is further reducing their standard of living, it will be very easy for someone to mobilize against it, rally against climate action in general, sweep away this bill and sweep away all other activity to deal with climate.

Speaker, I talked about Fort McMurray. Writers talk about different phenomena, different events going on in the world. Although there is an unease that is building in the population, there is not yet, in the broad consciousness of Ontarians and, frankly, of people around the world, a full understanding of the scale of risk that we're facing and the necessity of movement, the necessity to move things forward on a rapid basis. When catastrophic events happen and are reported, far too often they're not linked in people's minds with the underlying dynamic of a changing climate. Even when people start to draw those conclusions, it's very easy to say, "Well, that happened this time. That was an isolated event. It won't happen again," and have them draw back to another position, another perspective.

In order to make this bill fairer so that there would be the popular support, I proposed a number of amendments. I had a chance to talk with my colleagues. We looked at what it is that this bill would need to be fairer, to bring the population on board, and I'll just note a few of them.

First, I moved that financial and investment assistance be made to low- and middle-income residents and northern and rural residents to make the transition to a carbon-free future.

I know you, Speaker; I know where you're from. I know what you represent. I grew up in the east end of Hamilton. There are still a lot of people facing very tough times—in fact, with everything that has gone on with Stelco and US Steel, tougher times, as you're well aware. Those folks need to have support to deal with this. They need help in the transition from one kind of technology to another.

1700

I have to say that my resolution to this effect failed. It wasn't carried. I asked for a recorded vote, and both the Conservatives and the Liberals voted against it.

If we're going to actually make a difference in the lives of people who are low-income, of people in rural areas who, as my colleague from Timiskaming has said, don't have access to transit—in fact, their access has been rolled back by this government in recent years. Northern residents pay a lot more now because getting goods to them is expensive. Getting out of the north to access services is expensive. A big part of our economy in this province depends on the vibrancy of the north. Sudbury generates wealth for this province. Other mining towns and cities generate wealth. It isn't as though

they're just up north on a holiday. They're producing wealth and value, and to not assist them is a mistake and will drive them away.

Speaker, I had an opportunity in committee to talk about my experience in discussions with a colleague from Australia who's in the Australian Labor Party. In October, I was at a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in London. As I've said before, there were people there from around the world, many of them facing very difficult situations in their home countries. My colleague from Australia outlined what had been done in Australia at the beginning of this century, in the last decade. They were doing some very sophisticated stuff. They were really moving things forward. But when the Labor Party brought in their carbon tax, it was used successfully not only to overthrow that government in a subsequent election, but it was used as the traction to sweep away all the climate action that had been put in place.

When you make a mistake, when you lose popular support, you're risking not just the government; you're risking the climate action that is essential to actually making a difference in our lives, protecting our lives. That's something that I brought forward in committee and couldn't get support for. I think this is a profound mistake on the government's part.

I had one motion ruled out of order. Whether it was right to be ruled out of order or not, I didn't have the votes to challenge the Chair. I had moved that the bill be amended to allow funding, provision of rebates or tax credits to low- to middle-income households or northern and rural households, to assist them in the transition to a low-carbon economy. I have lots of criticisms of the BC carbon tax, but they actually have allocated funds for low-income households and northern and rural households. Has it provided all the popular support they have needed? No. But it has made sure it hasn't been one of those firewalls that have blocked people from moving forward on the issue. I'm sorry that it was ruled out of order.

I made another motion. The member from Huron-Bruce talked about the number of amendments that were there. I will take credit for a very large chunk of those, because I thought and still think the bill needed to be reshaped. What I had moved was that the minister, after consulting the public, should identify communities that have a disproportionate burden. Again, the member from Timiskaming—if you're in an area where there's no public transit and you're car-dependent, you're going to carry a disproportionate burden in dealing with this issue. Identify those communities and support them. Identify those communities where, because of low income, unemployment, housing costs, lack of opportunities to transit or low-carbon infrastructure—support those communities. Focus in on them. The government of California, with its climate action, has allocated 25% of its cap-and-trade funds to those communities. We could have done that. We'd be totally in keeping with our partner. We haven't done that. That was rejected in the

debate. That was an opportunity to make this bill substantially fairer and it was not taken. That was an error.

I did move, further, and this was as a result of discussion with the minister, that the climate action plan consider the impact of the regulatory scheme on low-income households and include actions to assist those households with Ontario's transition to a low-carbon economy. It was weaker language than I think we need, but still a movement forward, something that I hope this minister will take account of, and I hope that not just this minister but any future minister understands the need in rural and northern and low-income communities to visibly make improvements in people's lives.

Money is going to be raised in this cap-and-trade process. That money should be helping those communities so that they can buy in, so that they aren't driven away, so that they don't see action on climate as something that is only going to reduce their standard of living. Because as you know, Speaker—and I know that you're well aware of this—if they see action that is reducing their standard of living when they are already so close to the wire, it isn't going to help; it's going to alienate them. On the other hand, substantial investment, solid job opportunities and real action to drive down people's energy costs will seal a commitment to climate action because people will see the benefit today, and they need to see it.

The bill also failed to explicitly assist in providing support for people in fossil fuel industries who will need help moving on to other work. Now, the common term is "just transition." About a decade ago, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers, who represent the oil workers in Alberta, did a very sophisticated study on what it would take to help those workers transition from the oil patch to a variety of other industrial and energy-generation industries. They actually looked at the budgets and the skills training needed. They did the highest-level thinking I've encountered on this. Their work is work that this province should be looking at and saying, "How do we ensure that people who work in oil refineries, who work for natural gas companies, over the next few decades are transitioned into comparable work? How do we bring them on board?" We bring them on board by saying, "There's a future for you, a future with decent employment, providing fundamental services to people but different from the ones you're doing today." That's the offer we have to be able to make.

I moved that the bill be amended by adding "to assist people working in high-carbon industries [to] make a just transition where their livelihoods are affected." I didn't get the support of the committee on that, and that was a shame because that was to the advantage of Ontarians as a whole.

There's another concern, Speaker, and that is to maintain industry here in Ontario, because to the extent that we drive companies out of the province—let's say they are high-emitting companies. If we drive them out of the province to Quebec, Texas, Michigan—take your pick—then we've simply moved the emissions from one

spot to another. We haven't solved the climate problem, but we've impoverished ourselves.

One of the things that's very interesting in this act is—and this is taken from California's practice—if you're importing electricity into Ontario and, let's say, you're importing it from a coal-burning jurisdiction like Ohio, you have to count the greenhouse gas emissions that were generated making that electricity. You have to count it and you've got to pay into the cap-and-trade system so it doesn't disadvantage electricity generation in Ontario. That is a very, very useful tool and, frankly, I move that we do similar things with steel, that we do similar things with cement, that we do it with pulp and paper, because, if you're talking about steel, there aren't that many steel importers in Ontario; you could pick them out.

I had an opportunity two years ago to talk to an executive with Gerdau steel. They are the people who take scrap steel around Oshawa. Using electricity, they remelt it and they produce steel. The killer for them is that they're dealing in a highly regulated environment. They are producing steel that they want to sell to Infrastructure Ontario. Infrastructure Ontario is buying steel—rebar, to be exact—for roads and bridges from Turkey that comes into the port of Oshawa.

1710

We need to put in place a regime so that steel coming in from Turkey or other jurisdictions where they don't have control on greenhouse gas emissions—they have to, in fact, pay into Ontario for that. We need to protect our domestic steel industry. It's a fundamental industry. It provides good work. We need it for our sovereignty, for our economic viability.

I couldn't get support from either of the other parties in the committee on that. That was a mistake on their part, because you'll hear a lot of stuff about—and the term, I guess, is carbon leakage, the idea that companies will leak out of Ontario because they're paying high carbon prices. The mechanism is there. You're doing it with electricity. You can do it with cement. You can do it with steel. You can do it with auto parts. It gets more complicated when you get into manufactured goods. You can do it with pulp and paper. We could actually do that, and we need to do that—not on this bill, not today, but in the future we're going to have to do that.

Speaker, the next thing that's going to happen to this minister is that everyone who ever heard his name, and I think most likely they will be ministers, will think, "Wow. The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change has access to a \$2-billion fund. I've got a problem. He can solve my problem. I will say this has something to do with climate change and I will go after him for that money." This minister, this individual representing Toronto Centre—perhaps another day, another minister, whoever sits in that seat—is going to be pushed very hard to put funds out.

I just want to give you an example. There is big noise in Quebec over the use of the green funds, because Quebec raises money for climate action. They have a Green Fund. It was revealed in the last year that a whole

chunk of that money was taken to build a new oil pipeline in the east end of the province. Oil pipelines? Really? Seriously? Come on. Is this going to change the climate problem we have? No, it's not. But I'm sure it solved somebody's political problem. I have no doubt of that. I bet that political problem was done and dusted as that oil pipeline was built with those green funds.

There was a tail assembly that had to be repaired on an Air Canada jet. Somebody had a problem. There were funds in the Green Fund account. The two were brought together. It was a wonderful thing—not wonderful for the environment, but wonderful for the politicians who had the chance to dip into that trough and solve a problem.

Now, according to *La Presse*, Monsieur Heurtel, the Minister of the Environment, went ballistic because frankly he didn't know all this stuff. It was all hidden. I have to say this minister is going to have that problem. He's going to find money slipping out under the door. He's going to have a tough time.

So Monsieur Heurtel, the Minister of the Environment, demanded and got changes that increased the chances that the funds would actually be used to fight climate change. In this province—and here, to some extent, I agree with the member for Huron—Bruce—there will be extraordinary pressure to reallocate that money to deal with the deficit so that when the election rolls around in 2018, “Hey, the books look good. Somehow we came up with a few more billion dollars. We were saints, we were geniuses, and we solved the deficit problem.” That's exactly what's happening with Hydro One: all that money being flowed to make the books look good.

There is a variety of ways that one can have fun with numbers. Projects that were signed off a long time ago will suddenly have funds reallocated into them from the green fund, and Bob's your uncle. “Yes, we spent it on something good. Yes, we spent the money a long time ago. We flowed it.” I'll give you an example in Ontario: the green bonds. As you may well be aware—you're from Hamilton—St. Joe's hospital has a facility. I think it's on West 5th, on the Mountain. That facility was completed in December 2014. If you go into the green bond funds, the website in Ontario, you'll find that money was allocated from the green bonds to this project completed in December 2014. That's no surprise to my colleague from Nipissing, who, like me, was scarred by a long experience on a committee of inquiry. We've never been the same since, I think, member.

When I went through all of that, the disclaimer by the Auditor General of Ontario was interesting to me. It's worth the read, because I thought, she is one smart auditor or she has some very good lawyers. It's written that she has audited but not for the allocation of the funds to the intended use. I'm paraphrasing.

I asked her about this. She said, “Yes, money comes in, money goes out. I audit to make sure that the money that came in and the amount that goes out is the same, that there's no hanky-panky that way.” But does she audit to see that the money was actually spent for the intended purpose? No. She doesn't claim the ability to do

that or the resources to do that. So there's the opportunity to allocate money to things that have already been paid for.

The other thing that opens up as an opportunity is what the government is doing with funds for debt retirement and funds that are earned from Ontario Power Generation and, still, in part, from Hydro One.

The Ontario Electricity Financial Corp.—I have to say, I don't know who put all this together, but it's someone who is clearly a genius, because this corporation—it's an account held by the province of Ontario—is supposed to take the money from those two corporations and use it to pay down debt. I'll just read: “The province has committed to dedicate the cumulative combined net income of OPG and Hydro One”—then there's a caveat that allows them to scoop a few hundred million out—“in excess of the province's interest cost of its investment in its electricity subsidiaries to” the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. So they pay off their necessary expenses, defined very broadly, I'm sure, and what's left over is supposed to go to pay off the old debt.

Speaker, I know you'll be shocked—I know you're a hardbitten man and you've seen many things in your time: When you go to the balance sheet, the assets, what we have here are IOUs from the province of Ontario. They didn't actually pass that money on. They put down here, “due from the province of Ontario, \$3,266,000,000.” That's amazing. What they've done here is they've taken that revenue that's supposed to pay down the debt, they've flowed it somewhere else—exactly where, I don't know—and left an IOU on the books. That's a real risk with the greenhouse gas reduction account.

This minister will be under incredible pressure—pressure hard enough to make a diamond—to cough up the cash, to play with the books. So I think it's really critical that things be as transparent as possible, simply to protect the funds and, frankly, to put the minister in a position to say, “You can't do that. You're going to kill me politically if you flow that money to the hockey rink in your riding that you've been hoping to build for so long” or “You will kill me politically if you take all the money and put it into deficit reduction.” So we put forward a series of amendments, motions to try to make things more transparent, and I'll just touch on some of them.

We tried to protect the definition of the greenhouse gas reduction account that was defined in the 2009 bill. I've been around for a while, Speaker. I got to debate cap-and-trade back in the day. At that time, they set up a special purpose account, and I had problems with the bill then, but at least it was a special purpose account and you could, to a greater extent, track the money going in and out. Well, they junked that. We tried to defend it, protect it, make sure it was kept. “No, that's gone.” They didn't like that, so we said—we'd had a chance to talk to a few people—“You don't have to be fancy. Set up a special purpose entity that houses the funds.” No, they didn't like that.

1720

In the end, many, if not most, of the transparency amendments that we tried to put forward were defeated. I tried to define this as a special purpose account: "For the purpose of the Financial Administration Act," magic words that the lawyers sprinkled on this, "money deposited in the greenhouse gas reduction account shall be deemed to be money paid to Ontario for the special purposes described in subsection (2)." Subsection (2) is what this money is supposed to be used for. So it was trying to protect it, trying to protect whoever's the minister in the future from the incredible pressure they will be under to move the money somewhere else. No, we couldn't get support for that.

I tried to get a change—right now, the money can be allocated for things that directly take on climate change or indirectly. As I said in committee, "Okay, I'm in a committee room. We're having a meeting. The Clerk is here. Indirectly, we're helping to take on climate change. Will the cost of running this committee fit the description or definition of indirectly taking on climate change?" "Indirect" is a pretty broad word, so I would say you probably could do that. Speaker, that was rejected by the Liberals.

I tried to change the word "expenditures" to "direct costs," because expenditures—there's a fair bit of wiggle room. Those IOUs to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. come up. I tried to change it to "direct costs" and didn't get anywhere.

I also put forward a motion saying that you can only spend money from the greenhouse gas reduction account on things that are in the climate plan, figuring that if it's in the climate plan—like, "Retrofit 100,000 houses"—that would cover it. If it was, "Put up a bigger sign in front of Liberal Party headquarters," that wouldn't make it into the climate change plan, or would be noticed if it was in it, and there would be some protection. They weren't interested in that.

There are a number of things that we tried to do to protect the public interest and, to the extent that the minister will be held accountable for climate action, to protect the minister's ability to actually act. We weren't successful with that, unfortunately.

We also tried to amend the bill so that it reflected the requests of the Financial Accountability Officer. I'm just going to read from yesterday's Hansard. This is the member from Beaches—East York, and this is what he said to the House. This isn't something that was said out on a street corner. This wasn't a chat. This is what he said:

"We recognize how essentially important it is to have the Financial Accountability Officer have the opportunity to make a full analysis on the decision-making of the government.

"So we crafted a motion, with the assistance of the Financial Accountability Officer, that would satisfy his key objective to have all the information he required for decisions that we took—not for all the decisions that we considered taking, because that's way too wide a breadth,

and all the different ideas that come forward get filtered down through our experts, both within the ministry, with the breadth and knowledge that the minister himself brings to the file."

That's not true. That didn't happen. What did the Financial Accountability Officer say? He wrote this letter to Grant Crack, the Chair of the Standing Committee on General Government and—

Mr. Arthur Potts: You're taking it out of context again.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm not taking this out of context at all.

"During clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, the committee"—

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You're not in your seat.

Mr. Arthur Potts: So what?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): So what? If you want to say anything more, I'd suggest you get back to your seat, and if you say too much, I'll be shutting you down.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: "During clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, the committee added subsection 68(3.1) to the proposed act, which requires the minister to report at least once a year on his evaluations of the greenhouse gas reduction initiatives approved by the Treasury Board. The government member who proposed the amendment, MPP Arthur Potts, said that '[f]rom our discussions with the Financial Accountability Office, this is what they were looking for.'" You know what? That's pretty much what he said to the House yesterday: "We crafted a motion, with the assistance of the Financial Accountability Officer...."

"In claiming that the reporting requirement was 'what [I was] looking for,' the member misrepresented my opinion and level of participation in the development of amendments to the bill. Furthermore, the member did not ask me whether the requirement was consistent with my recommendations."

Mr. Randy Hillier: Wow. Misleading.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It is misleading. I'll say to you, Speaker, in the past Minister of Energy Chiarelli spoke about the profit we were making from dumping electricity on the electricity market. He said that we were making a profit. He had to withdraw a week later because he was wrong. When you misrepresent what an independent officer of the Legislature has to say, you should withdraw, correct the record and, frankly, have respect for that independent officer. I would say, given that there's no withdrawal coming forward, that everyone in this House should be very cautious with everything they hear from that member, because when the facts come out, another tale may well be told; when the facts come out and the facts are not what was told to this House. That is of consequence.

The member hasn't been here very long, but misrepresenting someone to the House is normally considered pretty serious. It affects your credibility. It affects

whether or not people will believe you in the years to come.

Interjection: Peter, we know how you are.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Oh, yes, always a treat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well—
Interjections.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Now I'm ready, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): No, I'm ready and it won't be long.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I actually did listen to the Financial Accountability Officer when he came before the committee. He recognized that there may be some issues with cabinet confidentiality. I won't quote him further. He just said that. He did say that it would be useful if the minister's review and evaluation that's provided for in the bill was structured in a way so as to maximize accessibility to the Financial Accountability Officer under the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013. I actually took what he had to say to the committee, thought that he was being discreet and thoughtful, and moved that. I know you'll be shocked to hear this, Speaker; you wouldn't expect this, but the motion did lose.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: No?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No. There's disbelief in the faces and voices of many members.

Speaker, we have a Financial Accountability Officer to protect the interests of this Legislature or the legislators who sit in it, and when they make a reasonable request for information that would allow them to give us the useful analysis, it should be followed. The disrespect of the government in rejecting the request of the Financial Accountability Officer is not something that can simply be waived away.

The next point I want to make, Speaker, is that there's a lawsuit going on in California. It's a lawsuit against the government of California around the auctions for cap-and-trade. That lawsuit was reported on the website Carbon Pulse on May 9: "A four-year-old lawsuit brought by manufacturers against California's carbon market, and specifically its auctioning system," is a substantial lawsuit.

The manufacturers initially didn't succeed. They are appealing: "The manufacturers appealed and last month an appellate court sent all parties seven questions seeking clarity on issues, including whether the proceeds are being used to replace general budgetary spending."

To the extent that the government plays games with the greenhouse gas reduction money, flows it into other areas, flows it into expenditures that have already been made to open up fiscal space to spend on something else, they undermine the potential—they undermine the utility of this program in its entirety. That is consequential because if the government says this is the centrepiece of their climate activity, I don't think that's wise on their part. They should see it as simply an adjunct, but if they see it as the centre, they should be acting to protect it.

1730

What they have done with the bill, as currently structured, with a lack of transparency and with locking

out the Financial Accountability Officer, does not bode well for the future. It strengthens the argument by the member for Huron—Bruce that there's a lot more going on here than simply dealing with climate change. Transparency would inoculate the government against those accusations; lack of transparency opens the door to those accusations.

Ah, time is so short, Speaker, and so much to cover. The minister and the government will also be under incredible pressure around effectiveness. This whole process will be watched closely, and a failure to actually deliver the goods will mean an awful lot of heat. In Quebec, the slow pace of action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions has been a lightning rod for criticism. Again, *La Presse*, April 20—I'm sure there are others who can Google it and who can read French far better than I can.

I will give a very rough translation: Last month, the government of Quebec published a report showing the emissions of greenhouse gases had changed very little in the years 2012 and 2013. The report that the federal government sent the United Nations, which it has to do under its agreements, showed that there was actually an increase in 2014. Not a lot; it just fluctuated. But frankly, for all the hoopla, there aren't the reductions that are needed.

This government and this minister are going to have to use the funds that are generated to actually drive down greenhouse gas emissions. If the minister and the government don't, that will (a) harm all of us because we need to drive them down, but (b) harm them politically and their credibility.

There was a question about how cap-and-trade works in the rest of the world. The opposition has been strongest on this. Now, I disagree with their option and I'll get into that. But I actually did go to the Department of Energy and Climate Change in the UK. They did a report in July of 2012 on a review of evidence on the European Union's emissions trading system, and on the effectiveness of the system in driving industrial abatement. They had some pretty good authors, people from Imperial College London, Grantham institute for climate change and the university of Carlos III in Madrid—people who seem to have a background. They had quite a long report. I'm going to take a piece from their executive summary: Has the European Union emissions trading system driven industrial abatement? They write:

"While the EU ETS may have led to abatement in the power sector, the evidence on the impact of the EU ETS on participating industrial firms' GHG emissions is not conclusive. Several studies found that, in the aggregate, emissions across all regulated sectors declined by around 3% in phase I and during the first two years of phase II, relative to estimated business-as-usual emissions."

This can be a useful tool, but this is not a miracle worker. Government needs to understand that and, if it wants to be effective, has to recognize that the cap-and-trade is only part of a much larger program if it wants to get somewhere.

When you actually go to the website of the California Air Resources Board and look at their reports and look at their graphs, they did see a drop around 2008-09, just as we have here in Ontario and just as they saw in Quebec. But really, it has just been fairly steady ever since. When you read the report, they talk about a reduction in emissions per person, reduction in emissions per unit of production. That's always, for me, a trigger. It says, "Yeah, they're seeing these kinds of reductions but are they seeing an overall drop in emissions?" Not so much.

However, when you go to British Columbia—I think the government has spoken to this—where their carbon tax is revenue-neutral, greenhouse gas emissions are up; they are not meeting their 2014 target; and they're going to blow way past their 2020 target. Simply pricing carbon is not enough to actually meet your targets. What British Columbia has done has been extraordinary in terms of public relations and marketing, but in terms of actually reducing greenhouse gas emissions? No. Emissions in British Columbia were higher in 2014 than in 1990 by 10 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent. That's about 20% above what their targets are.

If you're going to talk, really, about climate change and, really, about doing something, there's a test: Does it actually make a difference or not? Do emissions go up? In BC, it's up. I don't see that as an option.

There are a few other things I wanted to touch on in my last remaining minutes. I touched on fairness, effectiveness and transparency, all three of which are needed for a program that will address the crisis that unfolds before us. There were a few other things I tried to do in committee. I tried to get this bill to adopt the Paris agreement on climate reduction targets. It's a fairly straightforward text that was agreed at the end of COP21. It said a two-degree increase, driving down to 1.5 degrees. That was not adopted by the government.

I was kind of surprised because I thought, "Canada's signing the Paris agreement." Between Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan, that's 91% of the emissions. If you look at a graph of emissions across the country, there are two mountain ranges: one is Ontario and one is Alberta. So Ontario not adopting the federal government's target was disturbing to me. I don't understand why they weren't willing to go with the COP21 target. I think that's a mistake on their part.

I also tried to move the greenhouse gas emission reduction target closer to what's common in the European Union. What's been adopted in Ontario reflects what's going on in North America, but the European Union has a much more sophisticated approach. The target for Ontario for reductions by 2030 is 37%; in the UK, it's 55%. It's higher in Germany and in Denmark. We're way behind. In fact, again, if you read the climate science, if you listen to climate scientists, we need to sharply reduce our emissions. Saying that we're going to do it by 2050 isn't going to help us. It has to happen sooner rather than later. The government was not interested in moving to a tougher target.

I also tried to incorporate climate adaptation. This bill should have been more comprehensive and should have

given the minister the power to put in place a climate adaptation plan. I'm not suggesting that the funds that were raised would all go to the climate adaptation plan, but there would be overlap here and there. For those in northern communities, making sure there's a firebreak around a community so that we are somewhat more protected than Fort McMurray—that matters; in major urban centres, changing the sewer systems. In Toronto, the sewer system is totally inadequate for the new climate regime that we're facing. Toronto, Ottawa, Peterborough, Kingston—take your pick. If it's a big city, they are not ready for the flooding and the rainstorms to come. It's simply the reality. This government could have incorporated adaptation into the bill; they chose not to.

They produced a report a number of years ago called *Climate Ready*. That report has accumulated large volumes of dust—dust bunnies. When you sweep away the dust, you can read the title. But it has not implemented that report. It certainly hasn't implemented it in the energy sector. For years, I've had a chance to question Ministers of Energy on this. It's not in their thinking. It's always: "Some small working group somewhere is looking at this." Are they doing what they're supposed to do: identify the vulnerabilities of the system and bring in a plan to address those vulnerabilities, so that when ice storms hit, as they did in December 2013, the lights stay on? Have they identified all of the transformers that are going to be flooded out with heavy rainstorms? They certainly didn't do it in the west end of Toronto in the summer of 2013. That one they've corrected since it was flooded. Once we have a flood, once the lights are out for a few days, then, hey, it's important. That's not a responsible way to actually prepare for disruption, and that's what we're facing.

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I'm going to finish with just a little quote from an article in the *New Yorker*, December 21 and 28, 2015. Elizabeth Kolbert, a very astute writer who's been following this issue for a few decades, wrote something called "The Siege of Miami." She writes:

"The city of Miami Beach floods on such a predictable basis that if, out of curiosity or sheer perversity, a person wants to she can plan a visit to coincide with an inundation. Knowing the tides would be high around the time of 'the 'super blood moon,' in late September," she arranged to meet up with a fellow called Hal Wanless, the chair of the University of Miami's geological sciences department.

Now, they went off on a day that was "hot, breathless ... with a brilliant blue sky." They went off across the MacArthur Causeway. I'm not familiar with it; I haven't been to Miami. They turned onto a side street, and soon were confronting "a pond-sized puddle." It wasn't raining.

"Water gushed down the road and into an underground garage. We stopped in front of a four-story apartment building, which was surrounded by a groomed lawn. Water seemed to be bubbling out of the turf. Wanless took off his shoes and socks and pulled on a pair of" boots. He found that it was salt water bubbling up.

They got into a car and went down to another neighbourhood—a neighbourhood of multi-million-dollar homes, where “the water was creeping under the security gates and up the driveways.”

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's the ocean.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, it was indeed.

“Porsches and Mercedeses sat flooded up to their chassis.” What Mr. Wanless said was: “This is today, you know. This isn't with two feet of sea-level rise”—something that's in the cards over the next few decades. This is today that, increasingly, that real estate is being rendered valueless because it floods in high tides. To cope with its recurrent flooding, Miami Beach has already spent something like \$100 million. It's planning to spend several hundred million more.

We here in the north are dealing with fire. They in the south are dealing with water—salt water. For all of us, north and south, the potential is there for a substantial reduction in our standard of living, disruption and loss, and risk to property, to health and to life, which we should be acting on.

This bill could have been a lot better. I appreciate the minister and his political staff being willing to talk, to try to solve problems and make some changes. But this bill, unless it's part of a very ambitious climate plan, is not going to do what needs to be done for Ontario and for the climate.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. With your indulgence this evening, I would like to wish our chief government whip a very happy birthday.

Monsieur le Président, avec votre permission, je voudrais féliciter notre chef whip—

Des voix: Chef.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: —la chef de whipping, pour son anniversaire.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: La whip en chef. La whip en chef.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: La whip en chef. Merci.

Interjections: Happy birthday.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That wasn't really a point of order, but happy birthday to the chief whipper.

We have another point of order from—

Mr. Randy Hillier: No, no. Questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments from the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. Wait a minute. Look, folks, I've got six different people yelling at me at the same time. I can only look in one direction.

Sorry. The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Mileczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I can attest to the chief whip's abilities to ensure that people on our side stand up when they're supposed to stand up.

I'm very pleased to stand up and give some comments on the remarks from the member for Toronto–Danforth on Bill 172, the climate change act. The member from Toronto–Danforth has a very long and distinguished career of speaking about environmental and climate change issues. When he speaks on these issues, I do listen very carefully. It does not mean I agree with every single thing he says, but he does provide good insight and good advice.

I just want to make a point of speaking to where the proceeds from this initiative can go, where the legislation directs they can go: energy use, land use and buildings, infrastructure, transportation, industry, agriculture and forestry, waste management, education and training, research and innovation. Yes, it is a broad list of initiatives, but it is a list of initiatives that can be very clearly demonstrated where and how they are related to issues related to addressing climate change.

Throughout various initiatives of the government around infrastructure and planning, the issues of resiliency are embedded there. It is a point of great significance that resiliency and ensuring that climate change resistance are built into this government's spending on infrastructure and other initiatives. This bill will help ensure that continues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Now the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you so very much, Speaker.

There are two elements I'd like to speak to from the member for Toronto–Danforth's debate. The first was that he mentioned the twisting of comments in the committee by the member for Beaches–East York. I think it is important that we recognize that honourable members do not misrepresent or twist words. It is disappointing to me that the member for Beaches–East York has not seen fit to address those concerns. His actions, I believe, bring dishonour on all members of that caucus as long as they stand.

I also want to talk about another element of Bill 172, and that is that it's a cap-and-trade bill, but my reading of this bill—as I mentioned in my earlier comments on sections 37 through 56—is that it's more of a rewrite of our administration of law than it is a climate change bill. I spoke about the absolute liability clauses in this bill. This bill really rewrites our whole concept of due process and natural law.

Let me give you one more element. This is subsection 54(2):

“Order by director

“(2) The director may, subject to the regulations, make an order requiring a person described in subsection (4) to pay an administrative penalty if the director is of the opinion that the person has contravened or failed to comply with a provision of this act or the regulations, an order under this section or an agreement.”

So we have absolute liability, and then we have the director being the judge and jury. Again, the administrative penalty is up to \$1 million, in addition to any other provincial offences that are also included.

This needs to be looked at and taken seriously by the Liberal caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kenora–Rainy River: questions or comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: As always, it's an honour to stand up and weigh in on all the debates in this House. Of course, it's also an honour to follow in my colleague's footsteps in terms of the lineup for speaking.

I think that my colleague the member from Toronto–Danforth did an excellent job of presenting a very passionate and measured speech in this House. I wanted to pick up on some of the comments he made, and that is, New Democrats recognize that much work needs to be done for us to do our part to combat climate change. But to truly have an impact on climate change, we need to make changes that are achievable for all Ontarians and we can't forge ahead with plans, no matter how well-intentioned they are, that increase inequality or disproportionately burden some low-income Ontarians. I'm specifically mentioning some of the comments that my colleague made regarding some of our folks who live in northern Ontario. There are many Ontarians, especially those living in northern and remote areas of our province, who have little control over their emissions, where Ontarians lack access to transit and clean energy.

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The member from Toronto–Danforth spoke about what it's like for people living in remote indigenous communities and the challenges they have with getting diesel fuel brought into their communities just for their generators, which are the primary source of power in those communities.

It needs to be said that you don't have to be that far north. There are many Ontarians in the northwest. We don't have access to public transit. We can't just hop on a GO train and go from one community to the next. We rely on having gasoline in our vehicles, and that is a disproportionately high cost for northerners.

What we're calling on this government to do is to use cap-and-trade revenues to help those people reduce their carbon footprint. We all want to participate in this, but the government needs to make it affordable and the government needs to invest in the very basic infrastructure in northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to stand today to support Bill 172, the cap-and-trade legislation. Let me begin my remarks by thanking the member from Toronto–Danforth—he and I go back many, many years—for his leadership and his collegial partnership with our minister, as well as our colleague here, to strengthen the government bill in terms of amendments and in terms of recognizing the importance of climate change.

Just this morning, the Environmental Commissioner hosted a climate risk disclosure in financial markets presentation. There were three speakers, and I want to recognize one of the three speakers because she is the chief environment officer, Karen Clarke Whistler, and

she talked specifically about the issue of climate change and the risks associated with climate change.

I was very, very pleased that as we're debating third reading on Bill 172, we'll now have evidence from the financial community—a legal firm like Blumberg was another speaker this morning. The professional accountants of Canada was one of the presenters this morning. They all spoke about the importance of climate change, and the whole issue of the conversation this morning was that every sector sees this as a priority.

One of the presenters this morning was Rosemary McGuire, who's a principal at the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada. She talked about the whole issue of disclosure and transparency.

The proposed bill, if passed, talks about the issue of transparency. I want to thank all the members of the committee who actually helped to improve or strengthen the proposed bill that allows the minister to consider whether the initiative is also likely to reduce—it addresses the whole issue of low-income families. I know the member from Toronto–Danforth will be championing that piece. I know he has been a strong advocate on this particular piece.

The other piece, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It's way over your time.

Ms. Soo Wong: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Toronto–Danforth has two minutes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

First, I want to thank the members who got up to comment: the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and the members from Kenora–Rainy River and Scarborough–Agincourt.

The member from Scarborough–Agincourt is right. We've been doing this stuff together from different perspectives for decades now. We were teenagers, I think, Soo, when we started.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thirty years.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes. We were awfully young.

My colleague from Kenora–Rainy River is right that sharpening inequality in this society undermines it. It causes division. It makes it difficult for us to move forward in a way that's effective. I think that it's incumbent on the government—they were able to soften the amendments needed in this area. It would be politically very, very wise for them to take the action necessary to deal with that inequality, and they can do it. They will have the cash to actually make a difference.

My colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore: I appreciate the fact that he, in fact, does listen. I know it'll be shocking to those who watch this on TV, but often not every member who sits in this Legislature is listening attentively as we speak. He actually does listen. His remarks touch on what I was speaking to.

I'm not worried so much about the objects in the act that the money is supposed to go to. What I'm worried about, member, is the incredible pressure to reallocate into other areas, to play around with those books. That, I

think, is going to be a problem not just for this particular government; it will be the case no matter what party is in. There will be pressure on the Minister of the Environment overseeing those funds to move them. That minister and that project have to be defended with a very high level of transparency. In my mind, that's absolutely clear.

Speaker, I want to thank you for this opportunity to address the issue. I think it's of consequence. I appreciate the comments from my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I seek unanimous consent that the member from Beaches–East York be censured by this House for his dishonourable conduct in the standing committee and his failure to correct the record or to apologize to this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I appreciate where you're coming from, but it isn't a point of order. I'm sorry, I can't allow it.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
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Thursday 12 May 2016

Jeudi 12 mai 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 12 May 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 12 mai 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND LOW-CARBON ECONOMY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ATTÉNUATION DU CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE ET UNE ÉCONOMIE SOBRE EN CARBONE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 11, 2016, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas / Projet de loi 172, Loi concernant les gaz à effet de serre.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate. The member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise in the House today and once again give my support to Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act. Ontario is a province with one of the highest emission rates of greenhouse gases in Canada, and we have to tackle this generational problem head-on. While members opposite might point out that other jurisdictions in the world might pollute more, we do not feel that this is an excuse to sit back and wait as the environmental and economic costs of climate change continue to climb.

Forgive me, Speaker; I will be sharing my time with the member for Halton, the member for Ottawa South and the member for Burlington.

Ontario's proposed approach to cap-and-trade strikes the right balance between reducing greenhouse gas pollution and fostering economic growth. I stand in support of this bill today, which listened to and considered all the concerns raised by various stakeholder groups and members from the parties opposite. Responding to their concerns throughout the committee process, this bill has been further strengthened to improve accountability and transparency, increase consideration for low-income households, enhance market integrity and protect personal information.

Today, I would like to focus specifically on two aspects of the bill: the protections it offers low-income households in our province, as well as the respect and

acknowledgement that it provides to aboriginal communities. Protecting those who would face the most hardships due to the increased costs of climate change remains an important priority for this government. Together with the third party, we worked to bring forward motions that would require a climate change action plan to consider the impact of cap-and-trade on low-income households and assist them with Ontario's transition to the low-carbon economy. Everyone will benefit from a greener Ontario, and, with the appropriate safeguards in place, we will also ensure that the most vulnerable will not be disadvantaged.

Madam Speaker, I am also very proud that this bill acknowledges the special relationship that the First Nations and Métis communities have with the environment. Over the past two years, I have had the honour to meet with many First Nations communities across the province, and I've heard first-hand how deeply connected they are, both spiritually and culturally, to the land, water, air and animals. Our government has been committed to engaging in meaningful dialogue and recognizing the traditional territories of First Nations communities. Building on this commitment, this bill includes a provision that requires the minister to consider any traditional ecological knowledge a First Nation or Métis community will offer in respect to that action plan. This bill also includes provisions that make it clear that nothing in the bill is intended to take away from the protections provided to aboriginal and treaty rights in the Canadian Constitution.

I'm also happy to note that we worked with a third party to strengthen the government's accountability and reporting on our progress under the action plan. Amendments were made in committee to require that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change publish a progress report every year rather than at least every five years. The long-term benefits of a clean and sustainable environment will ensure that all future generations will be able to enjoy everything that our province has to offer.

This bill allows Ontario to remain a leader in tackling climate change as it is only through decisive and affirmative action that we will be able to make a positive difference. This bill demonstrates Ontario's commitment to meet its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and to keep the global average temperature increase to less than two degrees Celsius.

Madam Speaker, I urge all members to support this bill today, as it is the right thing to do for the planet, for Ontario and for our children and grandchildren's futures. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill 172, and to have the opportunity to do that.

Before I talk a little bit more about the bill and the importance of it, I think it's important for us to underline the fact that climate change is a global problem. I heard the Leader of the Opposition in his questioning yesterday with regard to his criticism of the cap-and-trade program. What it reminded me of is the isolationist policy of the former federal government and the actual denial of climate change. To pretend that we can operate in isolation from the rest of the world is naive—maybe even more than naive; it's wrong-headed.

The reality is that for the first day ever this year in China, they had a red-alert smog day. What that red-alert smog day means is, "Don't go outside. It's not safe. Don't go outside." I don't think we can imagine that here. I know some of my colleagues whom have been to China—most recently the Deputy Premier, who I had a conversation with the other day about what it was like. The first thing she talked about was the air, and that they know. Leaders and governments know there. That's top of mind for them. You can't actually have an economy that functions well if you have an unhealthy population.

That's why we need to do this, and that's why we need to do this in concert with California and Quebec, because there will be a price on carbon. That price on carbon will increase as we go along. It will be a global market. It is a global challenge. We don't have any other choice but to work with those people around us to make sure that we tackle this problem, because if we don't, it's going to have significant impacts on everybody in this world.

I do know that the bill did go through committee and that there was some substantial improvement. The official opposition is not supportive of it. They have another plan, which I believe is something that is vague. I don't know if I would describe it as a plan. I think it got patched, or announced very quickly, very precipitously, to the surprise of many members on the other side.

I think that if you're serious about climate change, if you recognize that it's a reality, you have to recognize that it's something that we do in concert with our partners in the rest of the world. That's why the cap-and-trade program is key, I believe, to fighting climate change, not just in this province but globally.

To add a little bit more in terms of Ontario's position in terms of cap-and-trade: We closed all the coal-fired generating plants. That is the single biggest drop in carbon in North America. What that has led to is an enormous savings in health care costs and enormous savings in terms of people's individual lives, childhood asthma and illnesses. It's the equivalent of taking five million cars off the road.

0910

When you're looking at cap-and-trade structure organizations, we benefit from what we have done by closing those coal plants. I don't think we would have been there if the opposition were making decisions about what

we're going to do with coal. We'd still be burning coal. The reality is that, yes, if you stop burning coal, it will cost us more money. It has cost us more money, because we want energy security. But we're going to reap the benefits of that, because the world is moving towards a carbon economy. Okay? That's an important thing for us to remember, and I want to emphasize that we can't do this in isolation.

I think that for the Leader of the Opposition to stand up and talk about the flow of money back and forth on one side is—I don't think it's naive. I don't think it's naive; I think it's wrong-headed. It speaks to the lack of a plan, the lack of an understanding of what's going on in the world today, and what I would describe as an isolationist policy, a policy which would see Ontario withdraw from the rest of the world. I feel it's important to mention that, because I've heard the criticism from the other side. I really strongly believe that what we're doing here in terms of the investment that we're going to make as a result of cap-and-trade, in connection with the rest of the world, is going to help us innovate, benefit and advance manufacturing.

One of the things we've done in terms of moving off of coal was to incent the construction of renewable energy here in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much to the member from Sarnia. Thank you very much for your information. I think it's an important thing to remember that the world is moving to a different kind of economy. If you take a look at what is happening in the United States and how they're looking at moving off coal, how they're looking at gaining renewables, the kind of investments that they're making there, it's very similar to what we saw in the auto sector over the years. We build cars and sell them south of the border. So we're going to build renewable energy, we're going to create innovation, and we're going to sell it south of the border and around the world. That's what we've been doing, and they're buying our products, as the Premier said.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much. I was just checking to see who is—I didn't want to run the clock on any of my colleagues, but they're running a little late, so I'll just keep running the clock. Getting back to what we were talking about, I'm going to go back to—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: We were just talking about the auto industry; there we go. We were at the auto industry, and I was talking about how renewable energy and that innovation and that industry that we're building there is very similar to what the auto industry has been about here. We are going to need a change. That's part of cap-and-trade. It's the kind of innovation that we're going to bring to the auto industry, that we're going to incent, that we're going to do through the funds that we have, through cap-and-trade. I think those things are critical.

I don't want to seem like I'm picking on the official opposition, but at the time of the great recession, they

were against an investment in the auto industry. They were against us supporting the auto industry at a critical time. There were 400,000 jobs in Ontario that depended on that. That was a surprising thing, and that's kind of an isolationist policy as well. I think it's important to recognize that through green energy and what we've invested in renewables, we're building an economy; we're building an industry that is going to be critical in the world in the next 30, 40, 50 years. We're going to be the innovators. We're going to be the people who build. We are going to be the people who bring this kind of technology to the rest of the world. That is what our investment has done and is what our investment will continue to do through cap-and-trade.

You know, one of the things that I think is important to recognize in this bill is that in this Legislature we often debate things that can be fairly short-term—in the space of five to 10 years or less. We're making adjustments and changes to legislation to adapt to what things are like right now. But the work that's really important is the work we do that looks 20, 30, 40 years down the road when we're not around here, when most of us will be gone or close to going—our children, our grandchildren.

What this bill speaks to is a recognition that we have a responsibility to leave behind a world that's livable and manageable, and a world in which people—our children and our children's children—can thrive and prosper. That's a collective responsibility we have here, and I'm very proud that the minister has put this bill forward, and congratulate him on it.

Anything we do in here will be the matter of some debate and the matter of some controversy. It will be the matter of some criticism and opposition, and that's a good thing. That's how you get good legislation. That's how you get things through committee and make bills stronger. What I do want to emphasize, again, is to go back to the beginning of what I said: I don't think Ontario can work in isolation from the rest of this world. That's why I support Bill 172.

I thank you very much for your time, and I cede my time to the member for Burlington.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Good morning, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House this morning and join the member from Ottawa South and the member from Kingston on this critically important piece of legislation. I had the privilege of sitting in committee and working with colleagues to make sure that this legislation passes and has the kind of scrutiny and conversation that legislation of this import needs.

I think it is worth noting, though, and worth repeating, because there has been a lot of conversation in this House about how to tackle climate change, the most significant issue facing our planet. I think that's well known, but we're thinking about it, because it doesn't just affect Ontario. We don't live in a silo. We live in a global economy and a global climate. It's changing, and it's having significant and real impacts on the lives of people, not

just in my community of Burlington or in our province or in our country, but around the globe. It's changes in weather patterns, temperature—it's all of those things—and we cannot, because of the import of this issue, see it just through a lens that focuses uniquely on our own borders. This is an issue that really grabs us all and affects us all. We must—we must—work with other jurisdictions.

I had the privilege early in my career of working with the federal government to set up something called Sustainable Development Technology Canada. It is an organization that is thriving and continues to thrive because it is playing an important role in offering opportunities for really smart people who are developing technological and green technology solutions to help us as a country to not only combat climate change but also grow a significant part in the economy.

When we were in committee, we heard that California, despite the most robust and strict regulations impacting climate change and vehicle emissions and that kind of thing—despite all of that—has the most robust manufacturing sector and leads the country in terms of green technologies and innovation. There's that old saying about how necessity is the mother of invention. Well, we have arrived at necessity. We are beyond necessity now, where we're seeing the changes in our climate and the devastating impacts of floods. In my own community in Burlington in 2014, we had a once-in-100-year storm that devastated 3,100 homes and led to \$80 million in insurance claims. It was huge. It was significant. It impacted people's lives.

0920

I can tell you that the residents of Burlington—our chamber of commerce has won national accolades for its action on climate change. It has been a leader in this regard. Businesses in my community are seized with this import and they're actually in the vanguard and the forefront of technological innovations. There are companies like Terrapure, which are incredibly significant in the lives of companies who are trying to be successful in the new carbon economy.

Our government, through this legislation, is setting a long-term framework for climate change that is going to help companies like Terrapure and others like it to be more successful, to lead our globe in terms of innovative approaches.

We're smart people here in Ontario. I have confidence in the ingenuity, the intelligence and the innovation capability of our manufacturers to make a difference in the lives of the people around the globe, in the lives of Canadians and to lead that technological innovation.

The framework that we are putting in place through our cap-and-trade system is going to encourage that kind of spirit of innovation and the very kind of innovation that not only creates green technology jobs and green economy jobs, but really helps our innovative Ontarians take the next level in terms of commercializing the very technologies that are going to change the lives of people around the globe.

I hope that everyone in this House is going to pass this legislation with a resounding yes, because it deserves it.

Our economy needs it. Our environment needs it and our entrepreneurs need it too, Madam Speaker.

Thank you for this time. I appreciate it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a question and comment—I have, of course, because of the standing orders, two minutes now to ask questions or make comments on the speeches that were just offered.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mr. Ted Arnott: That's right. Quite often in the context of these debates, members will stand up on questions and comments and just give a short, two-minute speech on their views and issues. But I want to engage the government members on the speeches that they gave, because I know they all gave speeches that they believe in, that they're passionate about. They're concerned about this issue.

I would ask them this question. I hope we'll get an answer from whoever will respond on behalf of the government, that they will actually answer this question. That is, yesterday the Ontario Chamber of Commerce sent out a public message indicating that they are urging the government to delay the cap-and-trade plan for one year. They say, "The purpose for our calling for us to slow down before we hurry up here is to make sure we understand fully the unintended consequence or at least the cost-benefit analysis, and that ... we answer some of the questions that remain outstanding from the business community." That is a quote from the chamber's president and CEO, Allan O'Dette.

He's saying that they can live with a program to deal with climate change, but they're very concerned about rushing ahead and not having all the details. They also make the point that the government has yet to release an analysis of the economic impact of cap-and-trade, and businesses are still seeking details.

I would ask—one of the government members is going to respond eventually to this question: What do they think about this request from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce? Are they willing to support it? Do they recognize that there are thousands of businesses in the province of Ontario represented by the chamber of commerce, that jobs are at risk, and whether or not they would express support today for a one-year delay in the government's cap-and-trade proposal?

I would ask that question of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm honoured to join in the debate because climate change is really something that's so crucially important for us to address. It's a global initiative. We need to make sure that we have partners around the world, but it's also something that we have a provincial obligation to take steps and to show leadership on.

Our position has been all along, when it comes to any initiative for preventing the increase in greenhouse gas emissions—whether it's looking at reducing our carbon

footprint or tackling issues of climate change—we need to have three principles in mind. Those are that the implementation of any legislation or any policy needs to be fair, needs to be transparent, and it needs to be effective.

These are three elements that can apply to any legislation but are particularly important for climate change. The reason is, if our policies are presented in a way that isn't effective, then they do nothing to advance the goals of protecting our environment. Really, as a society, it's something crucially important that we protect. This is literally our home, not only Ontario but Canada, North America and the entire world. We need to show leadership in how we provide effective stewardship of this resource, this planet, this home.

Transparency: With respect to initiatives, we need to ensure that whatever is going on is transparent; that the rules, the guidelines, the numbers—what are the targets and how much in terms of emissions are we actually reducing? We need to know those numbers so that there's some transparency. Also, that transparency feeds back into effectiveness. Finally, fairness: The implementation of this legislation needs to be fair. It does not need to be burdensome on everyday people more than those who are the biggest polluters. It needs to be a balanced approach.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm quite delighted to be able to stand and give two minutes of comment on Bill 172, the cap-and-trade legislation. I wanted to start off by reinforcing a comment by the member from Ottawa South, who spoke at the beginning, about how the challenge of climate change is not one that occurs or obeys or listens to any political boundary. Climate change is a global issue. We cannot be isolationist in our approach. That's why a made-in-Ontario solution that only applies to Ontario will not be successful. I'm quite happy to see that we're partnering with other states and other governments to build more of a national and, perhaps one day, international approach to solving the problem.

I've had the privilege, Madam Speaker, to work in parts of Canada that, 20 years ago, were being impacted by climate change. Working in the Far North in the Northwest Territories and in the Yukon and seeing firsthand as long ago as 20 years that the climate in our Far North was changing: places like K'atlodeeche and Tsiigehtchic and Aklavik, where animals that had never been there before were able to overwinter because winters were not as severe as they once were, where words were having to be created in Gwich'in to address wasps and robins and thunderstorms—things that had never happened before. It's too big an issue to ignore, and I think we all agree on that. Our approach is a well-reasoned and rational approach to beginning to solve the problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a couple of moments in which to add a few comments. I want to come back to the issue that the member from Well-

ton-Halton Hills referred to because, as the critic for the Ontario Registered Pension Plan, this is a déjà vu, where decisions had been made behind closed doors, largely, on the mechanics and the possible impacts of the ORPP in a manner similar to garner the concern that the chamber of commerce has voiced, not only back in the debate on the pension, but now we see exactly the same thing on cap-and-trade.

I think it should serve as a reminder to this government that there are many stakeholders when you are looking at making any kind of significant legislative changes. This is yet another one which has been done in a manner that has created more anxiety and more uncertainty, once again, on an ambitious initiative that the government has taken. A one-year delay was what the chamber was looking at with the pension plan. That's what they're looking at for this as well.

It should serve as a reminder to the government. We are in a democratic process. We do have to listen, we do have to understand a cost-benefit analysis, and we do have to look at the impacts on everyone.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return back to the member from Ottawa South to wrap up.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond. Thanks to the members from Wellington-Halton Hills, Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Newmarket-Aurora and York-Simcoe.

I want to start with responding to the member from York-Simcoe. It's interesting that the member would raise the issue of the ORPP, which I think is something that is also a responsibility of all of us in this Legislature: to look after the retirement income of the people who we represent 30 or 40 years from now. It's kind of an interesting analogy. I know that the party opposite does not support the ORPP.

I think that's wrong-headed. I think that our responsibility is to ensure that our children and our children's children have a secure retirement. We can only do that if we take action now.

In regard to taking action now on Bill 172, I appreciate what the member from Wellington-Halton Hills had to say about the request from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. I would like to assure him that we are working with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to phase in cap-and-trade. At the same time, we also have to give businesses some certainty, and we very much appreciate working with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. We did work with them on the HST, and it's interesting that the members opposite—the party opposite—were not supportive of the chamber's position at that time, which was the harmonization of taxes, which was going to benefit businesses and make things much simpler and really help our manufacturing sector.

I take that all with a grain of salt. We will continue to work with the Ontario chamber to make sure that Ontario's businesses—we have one of the lowest combined corporate tax rates in North America—will continue to flourish. I think they would say, and they would agree,

that we do live in a world. We can't afford to be isolationists, and we have to work with the rest of the world to fight climate change.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am very pleased and privileged to have this opportunity this morning to speak to third reading of Bill 172.

I want to begin by commending and congratulating our party's critic for the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, the member for Huron-Bruce. She gave a one-hour speech yesterday in the Legislature to lead off our party's response to the third reading debate of this important issue. She has worked very hard in the standing committee, dealing with the public hearings that took place as well as the clause-by-clause amendments. She has done an extraordinary job.

Of course, those of us who are in the caucus support her efforts. We want to express our appreciation to her for the work that she's done. It's not easy to stand up in this House and speak for an hour and engage the House fully; but I was here for her speech yesterday afternoon and I thought she did a remarkable job, such that I even asked her for a copy of it so I could review it in terms of my preparation for my remarks this morning.

I think it's important to restate something that she said in her conclusion, because, again, she spoke for an hour, but her concluding comments, I thought, summed up very well the position of our caucus as well as many of her concerns. She said yesterday, "I've only outlined a few of the significant issues that the Ontario PC Party has pinpointed during the amendment process in committee and will continue to discuss as the Legislature proceeds through third reading. We're confident that we performed our due diligence by voicing Ontarians' concerns about this legislation."

Just to digress, I would certainly confirm that statement. She has done an extraordinary job voicing the concerns of Ontarians and the people who are concerned about this bill.

"However, it should be clear from my remarks," she said, "that we cannot support this bill as it moves forward. The PC Party of Ontario cannot prop up another massive taxation scheme that will only make life more expensive for Ontarians and more difficult for business. We've also made it clear that the Liberals should withdraw Bill 172 and develop a revenue-neutral model that protects taxpayers and is subject to rigorous, independent oversight."

That summarizes in basically one sentence the position that has been taken by our caucus and our leader, the member for Simcoe North, who has outlined his views on this issue and taken a strong position too—not without controversy, but a strong position—saying we need to be willing to talk about a price on carbon, but it's absolutely essential that it be revenue-neutral and not be a net tax increase on the people of Ontario, and whatever revenue needs to be open and transparent, not secretive.

The member for Huron-Bruce went on. She said: "Instead, our party remains committed to finding solu-

tions that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting our economy. We need to think creatively and innovatively.” I agree with that wholeheartedly. “We must consider a combination of measures, including different product standards, new technologies, transportation alternatives, fuel-switching incentives—i.e., geothermal, natural gas and retrofitting initiatives.”

Madam Chair, as you would know, a few years ago when our party was in government, we actually had a select committee on alternative fuels. They did good work, coming up with a report with significant recommendations for provincial government action. I think that report needs to be revisited again, obviously, and perhaps even updated, because many other technologies have come forward in the interval. But again, it’s something that we have talked about in the past.

The member for Huron–Bruce went on to conclude, “It’s amazing what industries are doing to reduce their emissions and make Ontario a more environmentally friendly place to live.” So she was acknowledging the work that industry has undertaken on its own. We know everyone who lives in Ontario is concerned about this issue, and the vast majority of businesses are responsible in taking their own proactive approaches to deal with emissions and try to reduce them.

She says, “This innovation is inspiring and will help Ontario grow into a greener, more affordable and more productive place to live. I look forward to helping make that a reality.” Again, that was the concluding comment by the member for Huron–Bruce. I thought those were very eloquent words and needed to be restated in this House.

As I said earlier, and as was restated by the member for York–Simcoe, there is news about this debate. Late yesterday, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce made a public statement, indicating that they were going to be making a public request of the government to have a one-year delay on the cap-and-trade implementation. They indicated that they were very concerned, that there is not yet an economic analysis of the impact of cap-and-trade and that many of their members—and they represent thousands of businesses representing many hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions, of jobs—are very concerned about this and want more details. Obviously, if indeed, as one of the government members just indicated, they are prepared to work with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which is what was said by the government member, surely they will want to ensure that businesses have the requisite details before they implement the plan. That would be, I think, a fairly straightforward proposition, and I would urge the government at least to consider this one-year-delay request.

As the member for York–Simcoe pointed out in the past, when the Ontario Chamber of Commerce raised the request for a delay in the implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, the government was apparently of the view that they had to listen to that and were prepared to work with the Ontario chamber. So we need to see the same co-operation here, and we would look forward to a response that is favourable.

I have actually—it was just posted on the website of the Chamber of Commerce just minutes ago, and my staff printed it off for me and brought it down here. The letter is dated actually today. It’s addressed to the Honourable Glen Murray, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, dated today from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, signed by president and CEO Allan O’Dette. I think this is very, very important information and is very relevant to this debate, Madam Speaker. So I’m going to inform the House of what is contained in the letter.

“Thank you for your continued engagement with Ontario businesses as you move ahead with the implementation of Ontario’s cap-and-trade system. As outlined in our 2015 report, Clean Profits, and subsequent submissions, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and the province’s business community understands the need to address climate change. If designed effectively, the cap-and-trade system presents significant economic and environmental opportunities for the province”—if designed effectively.

“Recently, the government introduced and received comments on Bill 172, Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016 and its associated regulations. We hope the business community’s feedback is taken into consideration as the government moves ahead with the implementation of its cap-and-trade system.” That statement says they’re not sure that their feedback has been taken into consideration, clearly.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce “was encouraged by the greater level of specificity contained in Bill 172 surrounding cap-and-trade revenue. The creation of a separate greenhouse gas reduction account to hold these funds, more clarity around authorized expenditures from this account, and annual reporting requirements are all positive steps towards transparency.

“Despite these positive developments our members remain concerned with a number of aspects of the cap-and-trade system. We hope you will be able to provide greater clarity on these issues.

“(1) What will be the economic impact of the cap-and-trade system?”

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Clearly this is a very important question that needs to be asked and that has yet to be answered by the government. I digress somewhat from the text of the letter when I say that, but the fact is that the chamber of commerce is agreeing that there has not been an adequate economic impact analysis done. Surely that would be a prerequisite of introducing a policy such as this in today’s economy, you would think.

“In Clean Profits, we urged the government to conduct and publicly release the results of an economic analysis of the cap-and-trade system, including sector-level impacts. This information is essential to help businesses and consumers understand how they will be impacted by a price on carbon. In particular, sector-level information is important to inform non-covered businesses that will not be directly subject to the carbon price, as the specific

impacts of cap-and-trade on their business can be more difficult to determine.

"We have not received any information regarding the projected economic impact of the cap-and-trade system in Ontario. We strongly urge the government to release the results of any analysis it may have undertaken as soon as possible, so that Ontario businesses can best prepare for the implementation of the new system."

Again, I'll digress from the letter, but what they're saying is that if the government has done an economic impact analysis and they're keeping it secret, that is unacceptable. I would submit that it is essential that if indeed the government has done an impact analysis, it has to be released. We need to know the details of what the impact of this is going to be. If they haven't done an economic impact analysis, they are absolutely delinquent in terms of their administration of government and this issue. I submit to you, Madam Speaker, that most likely there has been an economic impact analysis that was prepared for cabinet, and it needs to be released into the public domain.

Again, back to the letter:

"(2) How will cap-and-trade revenue be invested and administered?"

"While Bill 172 sets the parameters whereby cap-and-trade revenue can be spent, questions remain about how these funds will actually be used and how the greenhouse gas reduction account will be administered.

"The OCC continues to emphasize the need for cap-and-trade revenue to be reinvested into the business community. Directing cap-and-trade revenue towards efforts that facilitate businesses' transition to a lower-carbon economy, such as investments in low-carbon processes, technology, and other capital, will be essential for Ontario to meet the government's ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets. Providing transitional funding will also be critical to help prevent carbon leakage, or the relocation of operations to jurisdictions with no greenhouse gas reduction policies."

This is a very important point that they're making. Obviously, if businesses have to transition, they need to be able to make those investments to ensure their emissions are reduced and reducing. If they have to compete with jurisdictions that have no greenhouse gas reduction policies, which they will, or that have different reduction policies, there has to be transition assistance; otherwise, we're going to lose jobs. There's no question about that.

Again, back to the letter:

"Currently, the mechanisms by which funds from the account will be distributed are unclear. Who will be eligible to receive this money? How could a business with a plan to reduce its carbon footprint access these funds? Which principles and criteria will be applied to evaluate and compare project proposals? How long will the application process take?"

"If this revenue is to help Ontario drive emissions reductions, then it must be available from the beginning. To provide for a wide range of solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, access to this revenue should not be

overly restrictive. We urge the government to finalize and communicate the details of revenue administration and distribution in advance of the launch of the cap-and-trade system, so that businesses are prepared to take advantage of this opportunity to reduce their carbon footprint quickly. Government should work with the business community to ensure that the mechanisms to access these funds are simple, fair, and transparent."

Again, that speaks to their basic point, which is a request to delay the implementation for at least one year. If this is going to be meaningful, if indeed it's going to be a successful policy, they need to work with business. This clearly indicates why.

Back to the letter:

"(3) How, and when, will offsets be available?"

"Bill 172 sets out the requirements for the registration of offsets, but contains few other details. MOECC," the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, "notes in the proposed regulation document that a separate offsets regulation will be proposed later in 2016," that being this year.

"Offset credits could play an important role in increasing the overall effectiveness of Ontario's cap-and-trade system. Allowing covered entities to purchase offsets provides them with another vehicle to comply with their obligations under cap-and-trade, and can often be a lower-cost alternative. By allowing non-covered sectors to sell credits, an offset market can also provide an economic incentive for non-covered businesses to reduce their emissions. This expands the greenhouse gas-reducing potential of the cap-and-trade system.

"To play a role in cap-and-trade compliance, however, both covered entities and entities looking to sell offsets need much more information. How can offset projects be verified and registered? How can businesses buy and sell credits?"

"As such, we request that the government finalize the details of offsets regulations and associated protocols as quickly as possible to coincide with the launch of the cap-and-trade system. If Ontario is to support a viable offsets market and drive further emissions reductions, credits must be available for covered entities to purchase soon after implementation. The OCC and our members would welcome an opportunity to work with you directly in the coming weeks."

Question 4 that they are asking in this letter: "What will the cap-and-trade system look like after 2020?"

This is a very important question, too, Madam Speaker, because it speaks to the medium- and long-term effect of this policy, and obviously businesses are concerned about that because they think in terms of the short term, the medium term and the long term. They have to make long-term plans in order to remain viable and profitable and to create the new jobs that we're going to need today and in the future.

They say, "Certainty is essential to effective business planning and risk mitigation. Businesses in Ontario have little insight into what the design of Ontario's cap-and-trade system will be after 2020. While we understand that

the government is focused on getting the cap-and-trade system ready for a 2017 launch, post-2020 design elements are important considerations for businesses looking to make long-term investments in the province. In particular, many covered entities are wondering whether some free allowances will be carried over into future compliance periods. This has been done in other jurisdictions to maintain competitiveness and reduce carbon leakage.

“We urge the government to, where possible, increase the clarity of system design beyond the first compliance period.

“Overall, we continue to hear that businesses are feeling uncertain about the incoming cap-and-trade system and unprepared for its full implementation next year. To produce the most effective environmental and economic outcomes, it is important that government takes the time to get the design of cap-and-trade right.” I agree wholeheartedly with that statement, Madam Speaker. “This was underscored at the OCC’s recent annual general meeting, where the Ontario chamber network voted to support the delay of cap-and-trade implementation to allow government and the business community more time to prepare. As such, we encourage the government to consider delaying the implementation of the cap-and-trade system until 2018.

“The OCC and its membership understand the need to address climate change and will continue to contribute to this conversation. We welcome engagement with the Ontario government and the broader business community as government moves ahead with the implementation of the cap-and-trade system. Providing clarity on these and other questions will be essential to create a system that reduces emissions while fostering the conditions necessary for continued economic growth and prosperity.”

That is signed, as I said earlier, by Allan O’Dette, the president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Given that that’s new information relevant to this debate, I thought that it was important to highlight that. I wish I had more time. I’m running out of time and I had so much more to say.

I have to say something, though, that has concerned me for some time, and that is the fact of the provincial government’s efforts to paint the Conservative Party, in particular, as climate deniers. There has even been a statement made by one of the senior government ministers—it was made in this House some time ago—saying that no Conservative MPP, until very recently, had ever even acknowledged that climate change was a fact, or had ever even talked about it in the Ontario Legislature.

I wish to refer to Hansard, from the Ontario Legislature, dated October 5, 2006. That is almost 10 years ago. I was speaking in this House in response to a private member’s bill that was being brought forward at the time by the member for Ottawa—Orléans, Phil McNeely. We can use his name now that he’s retired from this place. He had something called An Act to make April 21

Climate Change Awareness Day. This is, again, almost 10 years ago.

I spoke in favour of his bill, and in the context of my brief remarks, I said this: “I think it is fair to say that whether you look at it as climate change or global warming, it is a real concern of many people in the province of Ontario. Certainly, it’s a huge concern for many people in Waterloo–Wellington;”—that was my riding at the time—“I’m amongst those people. The preponderance of scientific evidence seems to suggest that human activity in recent years is at least accelerating this change, if not a contributing factor. Obviously, it’s something that we all have to be concerned about, all of us who care about the future. All of us should, obviously.

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“As a father of three children, my wife and I are obviously very concerned about the world that our children and our grandchildren will inherit. All of us should share this concern and all of us should be part of the solution.”

I said that almost 10 years ago, so I was more than annoyed when I heard one of the government ministers indicate that no Conservative had ever acknowledged that this was an issue.

Tomorrow, I am meeting with a constituent by the name of Roger Gordon. I have written a number of e-mails and letters to the government on his behalf. He has his own company, and he calls it Green NH3. He has an ammonia-based fuel that he believes would represent a substantial solution to our energy challenge. I call attention to it because I’m going to be meeting with him again tomorrow. I would encourage the government to revisit the file that I brought to their attention about the potential for ammonia-based fuel.

I also want to use the one minute that I have left to call attention to the private member’s resolution that I introduced in the Legislature last fall. It was passed unanimously in this House during private members’ business to highlight the Wellington county Green Legacy Programme. For the 150th anniversary of the county of Wellington, they developed an ambitious plan to plant 150,000 trees in the county of Wellington as a celebration for the 150th anniversary. It seemed ambitious. The scope was very ambitious, as a matter of fact. Every year since then, they have planted more than 150,000 trees in the county of Wellington.

I am calling upon the provincial government to take the county of Wellington’s Green Legacy Programme province-wide and create an Ontario green legacy programme, with the ambitious goal of planting 150 million trees in the province of Ontario, harnessing the idealism and the volunteer spirit of Ontarians as a celebration for the 150th anniversary of the province of Ontario within a confederated Canada in 2017. I urge the government to embrace the plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: First, it needs to be stated that New Democrats support movement on climate change. We agree that it is an important issue facing our generation and facing the world today.

But one of the things that I have a difficult time with is that, for all the bluster of this government, like the Minister of the Environment saying things like how we have a huge historic challenge and millions of lives are at stake—you would think that this government would expand the scope, that they wouldn't take one piece of legislation and tout it out like they're the best things and they're going to single-handedly solve the climate change crisis that we have, and they would look beyond that.

One of the things that was mentioned that I think needs to be mentioned again is some of the challenges that we have in our own province, in Ontario's north.

We have northern indigenous communities, and this really needs to be stressed: They rely completely on diesel generation to power their entire communities. We know that this is something that is expensive. It's unreliable. It's unsafe for the people who have to maintain the roads, transport it, and we also know that it doesn't meet demand. It's not good for the environment.

The government knows this, and yet if we look to the most recent budget, this government's 2016 budget, we see that when it comes to connecting these communities to our hydro grid, where they can have access to free-falling water, of which there is an abundance in northern Ontario, these First Nation communities are told that they need to work with like-minded proponents and come up with some kind of a compromise and do it on their own. How is that solving climate change? How is that being respectful of our citizens across this province? It is not.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I do want to speak to this very important bill, and I want to speak to it from the point of view of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

The previous speaker highlighted in her remarks the importance of this to our aboriginal communities, and I could not agree more. I have visited close to 70 of our First Nation communities in Ontario, and I've virtually visited all of the northern communities. I can tell you that at every visit, when we sit around the table in the band council office, one of the issues that is raised, among a plethora of other issues, front and centre is their concern about climate change, and then they tell me the practical effects of what is happening to them.

I will give you one example why climate change is so important for First Nation communities. The remote communities depend on something we describe as ice roads, which are put in as soon as the land freezes and lakes and rivers freeze. They can ship in the heavy-duty stuff that is needed in the communities that they can't bring in in the summer. Traditionally in the past, the ice roads have lasted for three months, four months, somewhere in there—to ship in the heavy materials that they need for the rest of the season.

Now I'm told at these meetings that I go to that effectively the ice road season is reduced to about six weeks—maybe seven weeks. That has completely changed the schedule of bringing in the heavy materials and other things that they need. There is a very practical

way that climate change is affecting First Nations communities—four months to six or seven weeks.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to add my comments to those that have been said here. I think that we all agree that we need to ensure that our earth is healthy. We need to have clean soil, we need to have clean air, we need to have clean water, and we need to do it within a framework of ensuring that future generations have a strong, robust economy here in Ontario and here in Canada.

I want to remind the members opposite that just because you say something doesn't mean that it's factually correct in terms of when you talk about how our side of the House feels about an issue. I invite the members opposite to come and meet with us—we're available; I have coffee sometimes with some members from other parties—to understand our concerns that this has to be done in a manner that does not bankrupt the taxpayers of the province and does not drive business out of the province.

The figures that we are given—these are expert analyses that are being done, and that's why we're hearing from the chamber of commerce suggesting we delay the implementation of this bill—\$300 million going out of the province to California with this cap-and-trade scheme, and \$3 billion by 2030, per year. That \$3 billion means that's money that we don't have for autism, that we don't have for our education system and that we don't have for health care.

I invite everybody in this House to speak to their constituents and the businesses in their constituencies and to really understand that it isn't something that we do without considering the consequences to future generations and to all of us here. We want to have the best quality of life for everybody in the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people I represent to offer a couple of thoughts about Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act. Certainly, there is no issue more critical than climate change to the future of our province, our country and our world, and no public policy debate more important than the one that we're currently having on how to transition to a low-carbon economy and how to reduce greenhouse gases.

As my colleagues and I in the New Democratic caucus have emphasized repeatedly, the way that we do that has to be fair, it has to be effective and it has to be transparent. There are a number of stakeholders who have highlighted the fact that carbon pricing has a disproportionate impact on low-income people because of the amount of their income that they spend on energy: on home heating and on gas for their vehicles. Many low-income people are renters. They have no ability to reduce emissions in the way that we have. They can't bring in energy efficiency upgrades. They have limited ability to

reduce their consumption. We have to ensure that there is mitigation to lessen the impact.

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We also have to ensure transparency. That's not just our concern; that is a concern that has been identified by the Financial Accountability Officer of this Legislature. There are currently no assurances that the revenues that are generated by this cap-and-trade scheme will be dedicated to climate change action. There is the possibility that these revenues could flow into the general revenues of the province, which would reduce severely the government's ability to actually have an impact on climate change.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return back to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills to wrap up.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank the member for Kenora-Rainy River, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the member for Thornhill and the member for London West for responding to my comments this morning on this important bill. I also want to express my appreciation to my staff who have helped me prepare for this speech today, and who help me in my Queen's Park office. My assistant, Dan Roest, who is my legislative assistant, does a great job, and also we have a volunteer in our office this week and next week who is a recent graduate of the public affairs and policy management program at Carleton University with a specialization in international studies—he told me that yesterday. His name is Tim McIntosh. Together they did some of the research to help remind me of the current issues, and were instrumental in helping me get this most recent information from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to bring forward in the debate today.

In response to the statements that were made by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I would say I agree that First Nations have obviously very, very significant interests in this issue and that we need to be cognizant of their concerns. In many cases they may be feeling the effects of climate change first, and most profoundly and immediately. I would acknowledge that and suggest that we need to ensure that we're in constant communication with our First Nation community leadership and ensuring that they are a big part of the plan in terms of response.

I would also add my disappointment in the fact that the minister, who is a minister of the crown, absolutely made no reference to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce letter that I read. I know that the government perhaps hasn't had a chance to respond. The letter is addressed to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, but at the same time, the cabinet has to take these views into consideration. Again, I would encourage them to listen to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and one last push for my own idea of the Ontario green legacy program. I would urge the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Minister of the Environment to get behind it and help me make this happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too had a speech prepared, but because of the comments that were made by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I want to share with him what this really looks like. I'm going to talk to all of us about Mattagami First Nation. Mattagami First Nation is a small First Nation in my riding, in the northeast part of the province. They are located on Lake Mattagami, which is just gorgeous, with beautiful beaches and lots of fishing. They have a hatchery, Speaker, and you may be interested that there are presently three million little pickerels being grown in the hatchery, right there at Mattagami, run by the Mattagami First Nation.

But as far as opportunities are concerned, except for tourism and campers, it's pretty limited. Mattagami is really, really close to Gogama, when you're talking about the north. It's still close to an hour's drive, but in northern Ontario those distances are close. They were also affected by the big train derailment.

But, coming back to cap-and-trade, they, like every First Nation, have a duty to protect Mother Earth. They take that duty really seriously. The elders at Mattagami really looked at what Mother Earth will look like seven generations from now.

Then comes a request for proposal from the IESO. They are looking for about 200 megawatts of power; 75 megawatts is to be from hydroelectricity.

Mattagami, like many other First Nations, has a hard time getting power. They are at the end of a line that barely meets their needs, which means that there are constant power failures, very frequent power failures. In previous months, I have read into the record the number of times and the length of time that the power has gone off.

The request for proposals came out. IESO wanted 75 megawatts of hydro power. They put forward a fairly robust proposal for six megawatts. I realize that six megawatts is not going to change much in the scheme of things, but six megawatts will mean that those constant power failures will be addressed. It will mean that people will have enough electricity to start to put businesses together.

I can give you some ideas. There was an idea for a greenhouse. It's really hard to get—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm just going to remind the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs that there's no food in the House.

I return to the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mattagami First Nation, as I said, has the hatchery, but they would like to diversify. They would like to bolster up their economies and have opportunities, but in order to do this, they need stable electricity.

Have no fear, Speaker: Everybody in that part of my riding all have generators, but generators that use gas will be taxed heavily with cap-and-trade, gasoline that we already pay way too much for—and I will go into this a little bit later in my talk.

Coming back to Mattagami's project: They answered the request for proposals from the IESO, putting forward their proposal for a six-megawatt project in partnership

with OPG. They get this letter back from the IESO that tells them there was not sufficient capacity in the north-east area to accommodate the renewable project. Is it just me who thinks it's a little bit weird that the IESO put out a request for proposals for that area, where we know there is lots of room on the grid because they are at the end of the grid and barely enough electricity makes it there, but they get an answer that says that there's not sufficient capacity on the grid?

Now, when we started to look into this, we realize that other people from southern Ontario have guaranteed access to the grid. Those people will never come to Mattagami. Those people will never set up a six-megawatt program on a First Nation to make sure that this First Nation has reliable electricity, but that doesn't matter. Part of the grid is reserved for big promises that have been made to big companies at the expense of First Nations, who need reliable electricity, just like the rest of us need reliable electricity. This boggles the mind.

We have the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs who stands up and says that everywhere he goes, First Nations talk about climate change. I agree with him; they do. They don't use that language, but basically they want to protect Mother Earth for generations to come. Their elders at Mattagami had supported this green energy project, basically because it was going to help Mattagami have stable access to reliable electricity. It would decrease their dependency on generators, which use a ton of gasoline and produce a ton of pollution. They know there is room on the grid and they are turned down by the IESO because of promises made to other people to gain access to the grid, while the people who are right here and want access to the grid cannot get it.

This is wrong. This is depriving this First Nation of economic opportunity. They had already started to have one of their members at the college in Timmins start to learn so that they would be ready for those jobs once the project was going to be built.

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I will put into the record that Mr. Kamil Mina basically would like to have greenhouses so that the people of the northeast can grow some of their own fresh fruits and vegetables and, here again, fight climate change so that we don't have to import all of our vegetables from down south. Why not produce some up north? The answer is quite simple. We don't produce them up north because to heat the greenhouses would cost so much when you pay for diesel fuel and gas fuel to fuel generators. But once you have a run-of-the-river electrical project—six megawatts—that would be perfect. That would have all the electricity needed so that we could make sure that the hatchery doesn't run out of power in the worst of times and you lose three million little baby pickerel. You would make sure that some of the spinoff industry has a chance.

I'm going to read Kamil Mina's letter into the record. It goes as follows:

"Farming is the 'green mining' of all times and is one of the most sustainable professions throughout history.

"Water and fertile soil are available in northern Ontario. However, air becomes colder for almost 240 days of heating during a typical year. The conventional solution was to grow food in all-glass greenhouses, but owners realized heating cost becomes a barrier for a sustainable business."

That's where we make the link to having this six megawatts of green energy from Mattagami First Nation, which would solve this problem.

The motivation behind designing and building an energy-efficient greenhouse includes the following:

(1) It would create production-type job opportunities for farmers, which they call greenhouse operators, to grow year-round local food, including vegetables and fruits, and also raise other small farm animals, such as chickens and rabbits, and eggs.

(2) It would create service-type job opportunities for electricians, HVAC technicians, builders and concrete form technicians to build these energy-efficient greenhouses.

(3) It would improve food security to ensure food is produced and consumed locally, with the option of exporting to other cities and locations, which is expected to generate revenue for the community.

(4) It would create independence in food production, where the community manages its own food production, processing and disposal.

(5) It would initiate other food-related industries, including food processing, packaging, transportation—all this on a local scale—distribution and waste disposal.

(6) Environmental benefits—where the greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, with the elimination of long-distance transportation to bring food.

(7) Other environmental benefits include a controlled environment, where there are no insects or small animals and birds that are allowed to enter, and no runoff of fertilizer or nitrogen compounds that are allowed to leave the greenhouse.

(8) They saw this as an educational benefit, where there could be a one-year program offered at community colleges. The college that was interested in that was Cambrian College in Sudbury. They would help students learn hands-on activities related to sustainable farming. Besides the understanding of concepts and theories behind these activities, graduates of those courses would be called greenhouse operators and they would get a certificate.

(9) They would develop year-round food production for the community.

(10) That would lead to lower food prices, as energy prices are reduced. Energy prices are due to heating, ventilation, lighting and transportation over long distances, where the Mattagami First Nation could supply that electricity.

I wanted to put that into the record because it's all inter-linked. People in northern Ontario—I've run out of time, eh? Thank you, Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing it is 10:15, we will recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a large group from Community Living Tillsonburg who are in here the Legislature today. In the gallery are Doug Cooper, Michael Kadey, Steven Hoffman, Della Derrough, Sandra Bray, Matt Hoogsteen, Shannon Schooley, Frank Benke, Bonnie Edwards, Jeanette Branton, Don Skiba, Rose Henry, Bryon Crossett, Kerry Schram, Connie Shuga, Jen Vandewalle, Crystal Saunders and Marty Graf. I want to welcome them here to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Today is Community Living Ontario Day in the Legislature, and we will shortly be joined by the executive director, Chris Beesley, president Hélène Morin-Chain, and Ron Laroche, all from Community Living Ontario.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to welcome everybody who is here for Community Living Day. This morning, I was pleased to meet with all the members that the minister mentioned, plus the director of policy, Gordon Kyle.

Miss Monique Taylor: On behalf of the member from Welland, I would like to introduce some folks who are here today from Community Living: Kerry Thomas, David Middleton, John Smith, Justin Marr and Dale Sheets. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome two interns from my office, Olivia Eng and Johnathan Wilkinson. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Ted Arnott: We have a page here representing Wellington-Halton Hills. Her name is Samantha McPherson. She's doing a great job. Her grandmother, Carolyn McPherson, is here as well as her grandfather, Dave Comfort. I want to welcome them as well to the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to introduce my friend and colleague in the Scarborough-Agincourt area, Councillor Jim Karygiannis, from the city of Toronto, who is visiting us today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome to the House today the members from Walkerton Community Living, who are celebrating their 60th anniversary later this year: Linda Batte, Harry Woodward and Marion Last. They're travelling with Carol Patterson.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome my friend the president and CEO of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Ian McLean, to Queen's Park today. He's not in the chamber, but we'll be meeting with him and the Toronto Board of Trade later on today.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait plaisir d'accueillir dans la Chambre des membres du réseau de développement économique de l'Ontario: Annick

Schulz, Denis Laframboise, Pierre Tessier, Alain Brosius et Annie Dell. Bienvenue.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure today to welcome to the Legislature Mr. Naushad Jamani, who is a vice-president of Nova Chemicals, olefins division. Joining him is Ken Faulkner, government relations director, Nova Chemicals. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I am honoured to welcome Nicky Jones, Jennifer Matthews, Samantha Murdoff, Jennifer Mackay, Joe Crooks and Amanda Robinson from Community Living Durham North, who are here today. Welcome.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm not sure if they're in the gallery yet, but I'd like to welcome all the wonderful public elementary school teachers from Lambton Kent District School Board and the Thames Valley District School Board. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to have the parents of today's page captain, Julia Melino—who is from my riding of Vaughan—here with us today. Ada and Dominic Melino are here with us in the gallery. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome Hélène Morin-Chain from the North Bay Community Living, who I met with earlier today.

As well, I'd like to introduce, from the Near North District School Board, Judith Arai and Jan Heinonen.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I was unable to make the ETFO breakfast this morning, but I know we have two members of ETFO from Thunder Bay here today. I think they're in the Legislature somewhere. I'd like to welcome a president at ETFO, Mike Judge, and the occasional teacher representative, Nancy Nix, both from ETFO.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome Henry Boyd and Dave Burns from the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. We had a great meeting this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd like to welcome Beaches-East York constituents Stewart Carley, his partner, Bill Polski, and their good friend Gord Hardy to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to welcome today Don Seymour, the executive director from Addiction and Mental Health Services in Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington; and also, Debi Wells and Mike Lumb from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Greg Weiler, president of ETFO for Waterloo region, and Nathan Core and Jenn Wallage, also from ETFO.

Mr. Yvan Baker: On behalf of my colleague Chris Ballard, the member for Newmarket-Aurora, I'd like to welcome three of his constituents: Ruth Groves, who's a community development and campaign director with Community Living, and Andrea Sager and Emily Wierenga. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome the folks from Community Living Campbellford/Brighton who are here today, and also welcome Dave Henderson from the Hastings and Prince Edward federation; Doug Thur, also

from Hastings and Prince Edward; and from Kawartha Pine Ridge, Shirley Bell and Marsha Jones.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to welcome to the House Margaret MacFarlane, president of ETFO Halton; and also Al Bero, president of ETFO Halton occasional teacher local; and Amy Korzack, who is with ETFO Halton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the following ETFO leaders who represent teachers and early childhood educators who work and live in my riding of Davenport: Karen Brown Campbell, John Smith, Andy Lomnicki, Rob Fulford and Diego Olmedo. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I welcome all our guests.

We have in the Speaker's gallery today special guests: Mr. Pieter De Crem, the state secretary for foreign trade of Belgium. Mr. De Crem is accompanied by His Excellency Raoul Delcorde, the ambassador of Belgium to Canada, and—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —if I may, the rest of the staff.

On behalf of all members of this House, I express our sorrow and our outrage over the recent terrorist attacks in Belgium, and convey our love and support to the Belgian people. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. Today I was saddened to read about the passing of Sharon Shamblaw. She recently lost her battle with cancer. As the London Free Press put it, "Her death came after long bureaucratic delays in approving a potentially life-saving bone marrow transplant in Buffalo, NY." This is after Ontario did not have the capacity to meet the demand for transplants. As Ms. Shamblaw's daughter said, "It was a matter of a week and she would have had a fighting shot."

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Shamblaw deserved that fighting shot. It's too late for Ms. Shamblaw, but will this government promise that not one more life will be lost because of bureaucratic red tape and delays waiting for transplants?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, let me express my sincere condolences to the family of Mrs. Shamblaw. It's totally unacceptable to me that patients in this province should have to wait unacceptably long times for life-saving procedures such as stem cell transplants. It was, regrettably, because of situations like the one experienced by this family that I was alerted to some of the challenges that we have in this province with regard to

stem cell transplants. We, of course, announced additional funding in our budget to increase the capacity. We have already made some progress in reducing wait times. We've invested up to \$100 million for out-of-country care.

1040

I know that this is too late for this family and this remarkable individual—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: The government may say it's unacceptable, but this just happened. It just happened. This is your health ministry. This is your government's responsibility.

I learned that by the time the Buffalo transplant was approved by government officials and final tests were done, Ms. Shamblaw's cancer, which was in remission, had returned, meaning the transplant was cancelled. It was decided the transplant was necessary, but it took 130 days to have the transplant approved: 130 days for a medically necessary transplant.

Here is the question that Ms. Shamblaw's daughter asked. She asked it to the London media, and I'm going to raise it here today to the government. She asked, "You wouldn't make somebody with a gunshot wound wait for surgery. Why are ... people waiting for transplants?" Why does Ontario not have the capacity to treat its own patients?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I mentioned, we're investing an additional \$30 million in increasing the capacity across the province. We're strengthening the network, the three sites across this province in Hamilton, in Toronto and in Ottawa, that provide that support; there is a \$100-million fund for out-of-country. We have recently, in fact, changed the guidelines where even those who have relapsed with their cancer will be eligible for both in-province and out-of-province care. We're funding for a caregiver out of country to be provided alongside the transplant support. We've increased our funding for allogeneic stem cell transplants in this province by some 600% over the last number of years. The capacity at locations like Mount Sinai has gone up by 25% in the last year. We're making other changes to make sure that this lifesaving procedure is available.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: This happened in your city. This happened in London. It is happening across Ontario, and the government can say all their talking points they like. It's not good enough. This happened in Ontario. As Ms. Shamblaw's daughter Amanda said, "Things need to change."

The status quo doesn't work in Ontario. Things absolutely have to change. Saying what you did 15 years ago or 10 years ago or five years ago isn't good enough. A life was at risk here. We don't need focus groups; we don't need panels or more bureaucracy. We need investment in patients. We need action before one more life is lost.

What will the government do to ensure another family doesn't have to go through what the Shamblaw family had to endure?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, it is because I see this as unacceptable that we have acted. We acted in the budget with the \$30 million. We're adding a fourth site for stem cell transplants here in Toronto at Sunnybrook Hospital. We are changing the rules surrounding out-of-country care as well, and the options available for individuals on wait-lists in this province.

But the Leader of the Opposition needs to acknowledge and know as well that this is a procedure that, over recent years, has become available and become an option for many, many more people than previously it would have been available for.

That's not an excuse for inaction. I have created a task force of clinical experts to do everything humanly possible to continue to reduce those wait times, to make sure that out-of-country is a viable option and provide the services that individuals in this province do deserve.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. Because this government has been signing contracts for power that we don't need, Ontario has lost over \$3.5 billion in power to other jurisdictions. We are subsidizing New York and Michigan, who gladly take our power for pennies on the dollar.

When did Ontario's energy minister become the economic development minister for New York state? When did the Premier become the economic development minister for Michigan? Because that's the effect of this government's disastrous energy policies.

Why should Ontario's businesses and families be subsidizing our competition in New York and Michigan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition.

Of course, that party was in power for a number of years, and the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —the Minister of Energy of the day was the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean.

Minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have a list in my head and I'm going to go through it, but if you want to keep adding your name, carry on.

The member from Simcoe-Grey, come to order; the member from Nepean-Carleton, come to order; the member from Leeds-Grenville, come to order; and the deputy House leader, come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: On December 11, 2001, the then-Minister of Energy said, with respect to import/export of power, "Any power we sell to the US, to Quebec, to Manitoba, or power they sell us, is surplus power. It's opportunity power. It's pure profit, in terms that it's power that otherwise"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to be insistent. If it continues to happen and if I hear members' names other than their riding or their title, I'll start putting you on the list. It stops. Raise the level of respect, please.

You have one wrap-up sentence.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, there's a trade in electricity among jurisdictions. The IESO will confirm that, last year, we made a net profit of \$350 million—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, and if you'd like to try it again, you'll get a second time.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: Although it's humorous to hear the Minister of Energy try to explain why he is subsidizing businesses in New York and Michigan at the expense of Ontario, the reality is that the Premier is in Timmins today. In Timmins, the Premier is going to get an earful from municipal leaders who passed a resolution, saying that this government's energy policies are disastrous in northern Ontario.

There is no doubt that she is hearing story after story about how out-of-control hydro rates have hurt businesses and families in northern Ontario. I'm sure that she will hear many people tell her how they were in disbelief—utter disbelief—when the Minister of Finance had the audacity to say that hydro rates were going down.

Will the government be making an announcement today in Timmins that, for hydro rates, there will be some relief for struggling northern communities? Or is today's trip simply another photo op?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The level of understanding of the electricity sector by the Leader of the Opposition leaves a lot to be desired. Little does he know that for the industrial rates—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Little does he know that the electricity rates for industrial customers in northern Ontario are among the lowest in North America. In fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll do this all day.

The member from Nepean-Carleton, second time; Leader of the Opposition. Thank you.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I was in Timmins several weeks ago to announce a program under the IEI Program, where the benefit went to two mining companies. They saved millions of dollars by participating in

the IEI Program. The CEO of one of those was very, very congratulatory of our energy policies in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary: the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Minister of Energy: I know that it's highly unlikely that the minister will answer my question, but I do expect his response to be truthful and honest. As constituents of mine, the Koeslags have a cottage which is unused in the winter. Yet on April 3, 7 and 13 this year, they received three different hydro bills. One was for \$112 for no power. One was for \$116 for no power used. Both were estimates; however, their final bill was their actual bill. They used 20 cents of electricity, but the total cost had now jumped to \$137. Three different bills; three different costs.

1050

Speaker, will the minister tell us which other province charges \$137 to deliver 20 cents of electricity and takes three times to get it right?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Before I turn to the minister, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry will come to order. I have a good memory.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Bob, you're going to change the name to "Hydro Three."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order. You can count all you want. I can jump to a warning. I can jump to naming, too. It's my call, not yours.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I will be the first to acknowledge that out of 4.6 million customers who are on the smart meters, and who are metered and who receive bills in that manner, there will be some cases where there are errors.

The member should know that Hydro One has a dedicated telephone line for members of provincial Parliament to call with specific questions where they have bills that appear to be not in accordance with what you might expect, Mr. Speaker. We also have a new Ombudsman who is available.

But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the customer complaint service has improved dramatically at Hydro One. The stats will show that 90% of all—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. As we all know, Ontario is growing. There are nearly 14 million people who call Ontario home. In fact, there are 100,000 more people who live in Ontario today than this same time last year.

Peel is a perfect example of growth. We have record growth in Peel; however, funding across Ontario is not keeping up with inflation, nor is it keeping up with population growth.

Will the government do the right thing and ensure that hospital funding keeps up with both population growth as well as inflation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think the third party knows by now that we've increased our health care budget by approximately 2% this year in the recently passed budget. Of that, nearly a third, \$345 million—in fact, the member from Renfrew just—I've obviously said it enough times that it has sunk in: more than a 2% investment in our hospitals on the operating side, which is quite separate, of course, from the capital investments; the \$12 billion over the next 10 years; the \$50 million of additional monies that we put into the renovations and the maintenance that are required by our hospitals each and every year. But \$345 million, a 2.1% increase in the line item, will do a lot of things for our hospitals—not just base funding, but it also will continue to reduce those wait times that were among the best in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Listen: Communities across Ontario are growing, and funding isn't keeping up with that growth.

On top of that, the costs they face are going up, from medication to hydro bills. Those are going up with inflation, and funding is not keeping up with that. When costs go up and funding doesn't, that's a cut.

The government can deny it all they want, but the people see it when they go to hospitals and see that they're waiting longer for services. They see it when they're seeing services cut out of their communities. The government can deny it all they want, but can they take the first step towards fixing this problem and admit that they're cutting hospital services in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we aren't cutting services. Unlike the NDP when they were in government, who closed 24% of all the acute hospital beds in the province and closed 13% of all the mental health beds, we're not doing that. We are maintaining and, in fact, improving services.

In fact, the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, ICES, reviewed what has resulted because of our funding changes, our focus on quality and our health system funding reform. They found, indeed, that the number of patients being seen has increased. They're seeing the same or improved outcomes. They're seeing that the re-admission rates are remaining the same, but they're seeing, importantly, that for things like urinary tract infections, pressure sores, falls and pneumonia, those important things that can happen in hospitals, we've seen improvements. The rates of those important indicators are going down.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: There's something very strange going on with the Liberals, and I think it requires a translator. So I'm going to do my best to translate for them:

"Optimizing an asset" translates to selling off an asset. "Open and transparent government"—that's another good one—actually translates to making legislation in secret and deleting government records. The newest one, though, is the best one: "Transformation in health care" actually translates to firing nurses and cutting services in health care.

Interjection: You need a code book.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That's the code book. That's the translation for the actual things that are going on.

Will the government admit that their plan for hospitals in Ontario just means less care for patients?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, talk about spin, Mr. Speaker.

The budget for the William Osler hospital in Brampton this year is going up by an additional \$8.2 million. A little bit further to the west, Hamilton Health Sciences: Their budget is going up by \$10.4 million. All across the province, as a result of a budget which they voted against, which resulted in a billion more dollars being spent on health care and a third of that being spent specifically on our hospital operating budgets—they voted against that, but we're beginning to see the positive impact. They don't have to believe the government when we say the facts about 3,000 more nurses employed last year—an additional almost 8,000 nurses employed in our hospital sector over the last five years. That's the College of Nurses of Ontario that is stating that fact.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This question is to the Acting Premier again. The minister brought up health care in London. Let's talk about London: St. Joseph's Health Care London saw its budget cut by \$8.5 million. Over the last four years, because of inflation, the costs have gone up by \$7 million a year. That means, over four years, they've had to cut \$36.5 million from hospital care in London. Next year, they're going to face a \$17-million gap in funding. They're being forced to cut 60 positions and 12 beds.

That announcement came after the Liberal budget. Will the government stop cutting health services in London and across the province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm proud of the work that is being done in London, including at the London Health Sciences Centre—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: And St. Joe's.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —and, the member from London has just reminded me, at St. Joe's as well.

London Health Sciences will be seeing, this year, an increase of \$8.5 million to their budget. St. Joe's, this year, will see an increase in their operating budget of \$2.3 million. So perhaps the member opposite needs to

actually go and talk to the administration at the hospital and talk to the CFOs to have an understanding of how we're continuing to invest in our hospitals, whether for reducing the wait times in important facilities like the London Health Sciences or at St. Joe's. But the funding to London has increased since we have come into office. At London Health Sciences: a 69% increase in their budget since 2003.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That's very interesting. We've spoken to and we've heard from London Health Sciences. Weeks after the Liberal budget, London Health Sciences said they would have to cut \$20 million from their budget. So that just doesn't add up. This is in the hometown of the Deputy Premier. The Deputy Premier, the head of the Treasury Board, who makes the funding decisions in Ontario, is cutting hospital care in London. It's being cut at London Health Sciences; it's being cut at St. Joseph's.

1100

Calling a cut a transformation may sound good in a Liberal press release, but a cut is still a cut. Will the government stop cutting health care and health services in London and across Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, a billion dollars more into our health care system, and the third party voted against that increase; \$345 million more in our hospitals, and the NDP voted against that. Of course, in their last election campaign, they actually wanted to cut an additional \$600 million from health care and education. I just can't understand how, on a platform like that, when we know that would have resulted in thousands of cuts, in drastic, draconian cuts to health care across this province—it really would have taken us back to the mid-1990s, when they closed all those hospital beds, when they fired 3,000 registered nurses, when they closed the mental health beds, when they cut funding to hospitals and cut funding to health care. We don't want to go back to that era.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I don't think the people of Ontario appreciate, when we talk about cuts that are impacting them today, talking about what happened 25 years ago. But it's fine; if you think that's going to help your case, so be it.

The government's cuts have real impacts. People in London are being treated in hospital conference rooms. People have had to sleep on the ER floor. When hospital funding doesn't keep up, this is what happens. Will the government acknowledge that they're cutting services, that they're cutting health care in this province, and admit, first of all, to this cut, and then stop doing this and stop cutting health care services in our province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are so deeply committed to improving the quality of health care for Ontarians and the positive outcomes that they've come to expect out of the health care system. We're number one in almost every single indicator for wait times—the shortest wait times across the country. We have accommodated an increas-

ing population, but we're still seeing those positive outcomes—the reductions in readmission rates, the reductions in infections and things like falls and pneumonia, those important elements to a patient's experience in the hospital environment. Those are decreasing.

The outcomes are what we should be focused on, and on so many measures across the province, we're seeing improvements. We're seeing reductions in the average length of stay for both medical and surgical admissions. We're seeing that partly because we're moving more care out into the community, into home care, into community care where people, quite frankly, would prefer to have it.

NATURAL GAS

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of the Environment this morning. A few weeks ago, at his Economic Club speech, the minister continued to make uninformed comments about Ontario's future. He stated that he wants to remove natural gas from all Ontario homes and businesses, even though it will help produce skyrocketing hydro rates for those customers.

The industry and constituents are wondering if the minister truly thinks there's no place for natural gas in Ontario's homes and businesses. Why does the minister want to cancel plans to expand natural gas access to Ontarians?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As the member knows, I am sure, 35% of our emissions come from transportation from vehicles and 20% of our emissions come from buildings, and that's entirely natural gas. So we are working with Enbridge, with Union Gas, with the geothermal sector to improve the efficiency and, where we have better and more affordable technology for Ontarians, to switch those out.

I met with Al Monaco, the president of Enbridge, for over an hour. They are very engaged in recognizing that home heating in the future is going to have to come from sources other than natural gas. Natural gas is very important to rural Ontario for many industrial and commercial farm uses, and we have no intention of abandoning or reducing those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: He did mention the greenhouse gases, so he could pick up my bill, Bill 76, on the reduction of greenhouse gases if he wanted to.

The Premier put natural gas expansion in the mandate letters for the Ministers of Economic Development and also Energy. She put up \$230 million in grants and loans for natural gas expansion in her budget, but the Minister of the Environment seems to not agree that natural gas should be in homes or businesses in southwestern Ontario, or all of Ontario, as far as that goes.

Will the minister tell us who is wrong: him or the Premier?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is a commitment that I and all of my colleagues in government support. We do not see any contradiction at all between reducing greenhouse gas emissions—and as a matter of fact, the mem-

ber knows, because you and I have spoken personally about this, and I very much support your bill—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Through the Chair, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —and I have on several occasions offered my personal support. So I am surprised to hear that you would characterize—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chair, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —the many conversations that you and I have had personally about supporting your bill as somehow a lack of support. I'm not sure what you thought the content of that conversation was about—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): For the third time, address the Chair.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

This isn't a mutually exclusive thing. In Toronto, where I live, my building and others in my neighbourhood don't need to be running on natural gas. Those of us in the city can do things that folks in rural Ontario can't do. When you have an all-of-Ontario, Ontario-first approach, you allow us to solve these problems.

I don't need to drive a minivan. Some of my friends in the suburbs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Organizations like Quickstart, who were at first supportive of the new autism plan, have now come out sounding the alarms. From the media release: "Quickstart does not support the removal of any child from the intensive therapy wait-list. These children and their parents have been waiting years for intensive therapy and they should receive it..."

It's looking more and more like the only people not in opposition to this plan are the Liberals—experts, teachers, schools, parents, advocacy organizations, the provincial advocate, newspaper editorial boards and children themselves.

Deputy Premier, will you do the right thing? Will you ensure that kids over five are not removed from the IBI wait-list?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think there are some things we can agree on. In all of our conversations on this side of the House or opposite, in meeting with the autism parent groups, the autism coalition, ONTABA, the behaviour analysis group, parents and so on—and, yes, the youth themselves, which is very important—I think everyone agrees on some things, and they are as follows: It's unacceptable to leave these children on wait-lists for years. It's unacceptable for them not to be in service. That's exactly why we're investing \$333 million, on top of the \$190 million a year, for this program and creating 16,000 new spaces.

It is important that we listen to all the voices. The Premier has been doing that. I've been doing it. Many

members of this House have been doing that. We appreciate the input.

I look forward to a successful implementation where all families feel well supported and individual children's needs are met.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: To the Deputy Premier: Families are tired of hearing the Premier and the minister saying that it's either this new plan or kids are going to be forced to wait on the wait-list. That's simply not true. This is about priorities. With the proper investment, this government could give all kids access to the intensive services they need.

It's time to make this about children and not just about wait-lists. It's time for this government to do the right thing. Municipalities have started passing resolutions urging this government to do the right thing and not force children over five off the IBI list.

Will the Deputy Premier listen? Will she do the right thing? Please don't remove these kids from the therapy that they so desperately need.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think another thing we can agree on is that it is the clinicians and the doctors and the experts who make decisions about the right kind of treatment for each individual child.

Children who are currently receiving IBI will continue to receive IBI. They will be assessed at their six-month window, as they always are, and at that point the clinician will decide on the intensity of the services going forward. Depending on where that child or youth is in the spectrum, they will get the intensity of the service they need. They may need to continue on IBI for a while. They may transition to the new, expanded program. The decision is guided by experts.

Those families can and will be supported by the service providers and my ministry.

1110

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Speaker, investing in research excellence and supporting an innovative, knowledge-based economy are key activities to supporting discoveries that bring tangible benefits to Ontarians and position Ontario as a leader in research commercialization. The difference between thriving and merely surviving in this competitive global economy is the priority we place on knowledge, creativity and innovation and how we bring these innovations to market.

I know the residents of Beaches–East York would appreciate hearing more about what this government is doing to support research and innovation in Ontario. Would the minister please inform the members of the House and cite recent examples that demonstrate how Ontario is supporting the many opportunities in this area of advanced technology and entrepreneurship, bringing Ontario into the 21st century?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for that question.

This government has been and always will be dedicated to making sure that our province of Ontario is a global leader in research and innovation.

On Monday, Premier Wynne spoke at the annual Discovery conference in Toronto, and I had the opportunity to address about 3,000 delegates from all over the world on Tuesday.

Our government knows that if you want to commercialize good ideas, you need to offer a flexible network of support to our start-up companies and through an innovation continuum. That's what we are doing through our world-class post-secondary education system, through support to organizations like the Ontario Centres of Excellence, and by instilling a culture of innovation at all levels of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the Ontario Centres of Excellence. They have put our province of Ontario and the city of Toronto on the map.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the Minister of Research and Innovation for that answer and for the great work he is doing to foster innovation in Ontario.

I know that Ontario continues to support good jobs in emerging—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough.

Finish, please.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I know that Ontario continues to support good jobs in emerging sectors and in the knowledge-based economy. For example, we are now the top-performing province in Canada when it comes to innovation commercialization, and we are fifth globally. We feature an increasingly robust risk capital market that is such a critical part of growing early stage companies into high-growth, export-oriented firms. We are already second to Silicon Valley in the number of information and communication technology jobs and companies.

The people of Beaches–East York want to know how our government is continuing to introduce cutting-edge, strategic programs. Would the minister address some of the most recent programs our government has introduced to achieve this goal?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question. I want to assure the House that, despite our progress on various fronts in research and innovation and the commercialization of research, we know there's so much work to do to take advantage of the opportunities that exist in our province and in the competitive global economy.

We just launched the \$400-million Business Growth Initiative as part of our 2016 budget, which will help our small companies scale up and grow; accelerate our investments to kick-start an innovation-driven economy; and modernize our regulatory system to make it smarter and cut needless red tape.

Our Green Investment Fund, in the amount of a \$325-million down payment on the province's cap-and-trade program, thanks to the Minister of the Environment and

Climate Change, will help us tackle climate change and support good jobs and grow our economy.

Our government is committed to helping our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the environment minister. The Liberals are in such a hurry to take more money out of the pockets of Ontario businesses and hard-working taxpayers that they haven't even considered the economic impact of their reckless cap-and-tax scheme.

For nearly a year, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has been pleading with the government to release its economic analysis, but the minister refuses to disclose any details whatsoever. The only information we have is from a candid moment with the minister last month when he said his cap-and-tax scheme is "going to cost the private sector."

Will the minister listen to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and reveal how much this scheme is going to cost business?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: In the business sector, we will see billions of dollars going into every single heavy industrial manufacturing sector. We've been working with Mr. Allan O'Dette today. We actually have already started investing. We have a great program, well-supported by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, called the smart green program, which is already funded and in which they are taking a leadership role in preparing industry and small business for a low-carbon economy. We have been meeting and consulting for two years, almost on a weekly basis, with business and industry.

Every question that Mr. O'Dette puts in his letter is a question that needs to be answered, and they'll be answered in the action plan in a few weeks. He raises the issue of offsets. As you know, as members know, we have a joint procurement right now with Quebec, setting a Quebec-Ontario offset protocol of which Mr. O'Dette and others will be very involved in writing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Again to the minister: It's ridiculous to think the minister has no clue how much the Liberals' reckless cap-and-tax scheme is going to cost Ontario businesses. What's worse is that the minister routinely admits this tax scheme will lead to even more job losses. Of course, once again, he won't say how much. But Ontario businesses want to know the truth, and that truth is that this tax scheme will hurt our economy. That's why the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has called for the government to hit the pause button.

In the interests of protecting our economy, will the minister agree to the request made by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to delay the start date for the cap-and-trade program until 2018?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Further delays or delays, period, would mean that the cost of the transition to Ontario businesses would be much higher.

But let's just pause for a second, because what is the opposition proposing? They are suggesting to us, as the government, that it should be revenue-neutral, which would mean that there would be absolutely zero programs and zero funding to manage a transition to a low-carbon economy. There would also be capital outflow because we would not be able to leverage private sector dollars, which seems to be a concern of theirs, yet they have no answer to it.

The most troubling part of their position is that they want to de-link and not link with California and Quebec, which means that the price of carbon per tonne in Ontario would be astronomical and explosive and unaffordable for business.

They have no numbers backing up any of these, but we have been giving lots of numbers, and when the action plan comes out in a few weeks—a little patience—you'll see all of the modelling that you would need to see on this. We will continue to work with Mr. O'Dette and our friends there—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, through you to the Deputy Premier: The NDP has long supported a cap-and-trade program that is fair, effective and transparent. Unfortunately, government members repeatedly voted down NDP amendments to strengthen their cap-and-trade bill, including one to give the Financial Accountability Officer access to the documents that would verify the effectiveness of the government's climate change initiatives.

The member from Beaches–East York then tabled a much weaker amendment, telling us, "From our discussions with the Financial Accountability Office, this is what they are looking for." On Tuesday, the FAO said the member from Beaches–East York had misrepresented his opinion. It was not what they were looking for.

Why is the government misrepresenting the transparency of its cap-and-trade bill?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw because you can't say indirectly what you're implying directly. So I'm going to ask him to withdraw.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I do just want to preface my remarks by the incredibly constructive role that the member for Toronto–Danforth has taken in this. I really want to commend him and commend his party for their leadership.

Mr. Speaker, we actually—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

The member from Huron–Bruce, second time, and you might get the warning if you want it. Just ask and I'll give it to you right away.

Finish, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad you remember that.

1120

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I share the concern you have. This is a legal, constitutional, cabinet confidentiality issue. There are restrictions on access to government, and we have this often with table officers in the Parliament. My deputy is working quite carefully right now and very closely with the parliamentary budget officer, looking at different pathways, within the legal advice that we've gotten from the ministry and from the Attorney General's office on limitations of access and the points of access.

It is not a concern that's lost on us. We are continuing to work with him, but we are constrained by some legal opinions we have which we're trying to resolve.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The government promised that cap-and-trade funds would be spent transparently and effectively. This was something the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, amongst others, asked for. But then the government voted against nearly every NDP amendment that would ensure this.

For example, we don't know if cap-and-trade funds will be spent only on new programs to reduce greenhouse gases. The government voted against an NDP amendment that would have made sure of this. As it is, the government can basically spend the cap-and-trade money on virtually anything it wants, including deficit reduction.

Will the government keep its own transparency promises, starting by giving the FAO access to all the documents that he requests?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to assure the member that I will work to ensure that, within the legal constraints and the rules that govern this Legislature and cabinet, we get to him as much information as is humanly possible. I totally agree with the principle you're saying.

A government motion included an amendment that would inform the public of which entities have received free allowances and how they were received, which was asked for at committee.

We agreed with an NDP motion changing the reporting to every year from every five years, which aligns with the fact that I have to submit an expenditure plan and investment plan every single year and will report every single year—that a report on the minister's evaluation to Treasury Board be included in the annual report and given to the FAO.

Another motion at committee sets a time requirement for the release of the annual report at the same time as the public accounts on the greenhouse gas reduction account.

I mentioned, the last time I spoke, a number of other measures.

We already have the highest standard in transparency. I agree with the member's objective. I will work with him—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. In my riding, I hear from constituents, up to last Saturday, on the work of this government on the energy file. The constituents of Durham know how critical a clean, reliable energy system is to Ontario being a great place to live and work.

Wherever I go, I am proud to speak about the achievements we have made on our energy file. I tell constituents about \$4.4 billion in health and environmental costs that we're avoiding each year by completely ending the use of coal generation in Ontario. I speak about the smart investment in the nuclear industry and how this clean, safe energy source has brought significant economic benefits.

Minister, could you please tell the House what feedback you have received on the recent investments that our government has made?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. There's a lot of good news that needs to be shared about energy in Ontario.

As announced this past December and January, Ontario Power Generation and Bruce Power will be refurbishing the nuclear reactors at Darlington and Bruce, securing 10,000 megawatts of affordable, reliable and emissions-free power.

The Conservative critic, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, agrees. He said that “the recent agreement between Ontario and Bruce Power—to enable the refurbishment of the remaining six reactors at Bruce—certainly appears to be a good one.... The refurbishment agreement ensures we will have a stable supply of reliable, emission-free power for the next 60 years.”

And “ratepayers will benefit from the ... refurbishment because it will result in the province continuing to use nuclear as a source of reliable, cost-effective and emission-free source of electricity.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Since the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station is in the great riding of Durham, the economic and job creation benefits are also well celebrated by my constituents. Darlington's nuclear refurbishment project will contribute \$15 billion to Ontario's gross domestic product and create up to 11,800 new jobs annually. The Bruce refurbishment project will generate 23,000 jobs and generate \$6.3 million in annual economic benefits in communities throughout our great province.

Minister, there have been concerns raised on the cost of these refurbishments. To quote the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: “Even though the PC caucus supports the refurbishment plan of the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station, we hope the Wynne government has done its due diligence to mitigate any cost overruns that would affect Ontario taxpayers.”

Minister, could you please explain what precautions are in place to ensure these projects meet their—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to reassure the member from Pembroke–Renfrew. The nuclear refurbishment contracts are designed to protect the interests of Ontarians. The Darlington refurbishment schedule will only proceed after the successful completion of the first of four units. We have built appropriate off-ramps, should operators be unable to deliver the projects on schedule—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —and on budget, and enlisted an independent oversight adviser—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, second time.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —to monitor progress and spending. Also, the Bruce Power contracts ensures Bruce Power—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. I'll pick you off one at a time: the member from Nipissing, second time; the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, second time. It's never too late to get named.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, it's never too late for the opposition to hear good news. Also, the Bruce Power contract ensures Bruce Power assumes full execution risk—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful. Answer.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —for any potential cost overruns or delays. Ontario has more than 180 companies across the province directly linked to the nuclear supply chain benefiting all Ontarians, and nuclear will remain—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. There's a wind energy project that is under appeal in the city of Kawartha Lakes, near Bethany. After going through a time-consuming and expensive process with the Environmental Review Tribunal, now the Snowy Ridge project's footprint is growing larger than what was already approved by this tribunal and the Ministry of the Environment. This expansion, however, did not have any public

review or input. The modification report is 165 pages and the late expansion raises questions as to whether the company was working in good faith with the ministry and the tribunal.

Does the minister believe it is appropriate for the government to approve a project that puts out inaccurate and incomplete information?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As I said to my friend from Sarnia–Lambton, whom I've been working with on his private member's bill, I would be very happy to meet with you to go through it, talk about it and figure it out. I have to be very clear here. As some of the members opposite know, I play a different role, because these decisions are appealable to the Environmental Review Tribunal and some of them are appealable to me. I'm limited in what I can say because of my role in the adjudication process.

I'm very concerned about what the member has raised. If she talks to some of her colleagues, she'll know that in similar situations I've worked with them through this. I will make my ministry available. I will review it and I will also make sure that her constituents know of their appeal option.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, I appreciate what the minister said. There was a letter sent on April 25. They did ask you for a stay, which they were not granted.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Shame on you.

Ms. Laurie Scott: You have to acknowledge that the expansion of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron–Bruce is warned.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —the Snowy Ridge project will include work in the Oak Ridges moraine. I don't want you to miss that: It's work in the Oak Ridges moraine. The PC government took steps to protect that environmentally sensitive moraine.

Interjection: Ah.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Ah, we did. But you are disregarding this, completely disregarding it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You will address the Chair, please.

1130

Ms. Laurie Scott: You are welcoming expansive and sky-high wind turbines. The project's collector line will also go through compensation habitat for species at risk and cause potential irreversible damage to surrounding wildlife.

Why is the minister allowing industrial wind projects in protected areas like the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, in the one minute that I have to answer, it's hard to address the complexity. But I do want to just note that the member from Huron–Bruce—her heckle suggesting what I do would actually break the law. If she's going to be the environment critic, she should understand the basic Environmental Review Tribunal process.

But what I can do, Mr. Speaker, is I can work with the member—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What I can do is I can take some time—and maybe I should include my critic in the briefing—on what the rules and rights are for citizens, how the Environmental Review Tribunal works and what they can do. I very sincerely think that we have to protect the interests of citizens and communities in this.

If we can set aside partisan politics, I will work with you on that. I appreciate you raising an issue of such great concern to your constituents.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

The people of the James Bay coast, including Attawapiskat, are served by WAHA, the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority, which relies on the province and the North East LHIN for more than half of its budget, because the province has a direct responsibility to ensure that health care services are accessible to the First Nations people living along the James Bay coast. Speaker, did you know that there are only six mental health workers for the entire coast, and that none of them serve children under the age of 18?

It has been 30 days since Attawapiskat declared a state of mental health emergency. When did the Minister of Health first learn that no mental health services were available to youth under the age of 18, and why didn't he see fit to fill this gap in services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question, particularly about the situation in Attawapiskat, because I think, as the Legislature knows, immediately upon hearing about that mental health crisis involving children and youth in the community, the government of Ontario acted and committed \$2 million for an emergency medical assistance team, which was comprised, among others, of mental health workers appropriate for children and youth as well as clinical experts and clinicians that would work in the local hospital. In fact, they were deployed within 24 hours of us making that commitment to be able to provide both on a proactive basis to work with the community and provide the supports to children and youth who were experiencing this crisis, but also to provide relief to those hospital front-line health care workers, who clearly have been burdened by this crisis, to provide them with some relief and replace them with front-line workers who could provide that necessary mental health support.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The First Nations people of the coast need a long-term commitment from this provincial government, and they want it today. There are other health service gaps that the province should fill, not wait. There are positions left vacant to balance the hospital's budget. The province should step up, not wait. There are plans for layoffs at hospitals up the coast. The government should step up and stop those layoffs, not wait.

We have a crisis, Speaker, and time is of the essence. Will the minister make these commitments today to

improve the health care services of the good people of Attawapiskat and everybody else on the James Bay coast?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased, in fact, to talk with the local chief, Chief Shisheesh. The member for Timmins–James Bay was present for that conference call as well as the federal MP, Charlie Angus. We talked about not simply the initial 30 days of the emergency medical assistance team, but I told them that we would be renewing that mandate and the emergency medical assistance team would remain for an additional 30 days to be able to provide that support.

Also, they're working with the community, ourselves, WAHA and the other partners and with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to develop that long-term plan to make sure that we're making the right investments and that the right personnel are on the ground.

I was very appreciative that we were able to have all levels of government talking about that issue. Of course, we're working in very close coordination with our federal partners as well.

Also with WAHA, I have to point out that we provided them with an additional \$4 million in January, and \$4 million last year as well, to help them with some of those pressures they're facing.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Earlier this week, the minister announced the province's response to input from the public and to the 87 recommendations outlined in the report from the coordinated land use planning review advisory panel, chaired by the former mayor of Toronto, David Crombie. The substantial review that the ministry continues to shepherd and the considerable, diligent work done by the panel included 17 town halls across the greater Golden Horseshoe area and the consideration of over 19,300 submissions.

The goal of the review, as mandated by the Premier, has been to improve alignment across provincial plans and transit investments, and to support planning and development decisions that will create more complete communities across the province.

Speaker, through you, will the minister tell us about the themes of the province's proposed changes to the plans that shape how we use land in the greater Golden Horseshoe?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member from York South–Weston for her very good question. The greater Golden Horseshoe, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is Canada's fastest-growing urban region and the province's economic engine.

The carefully considered changes we are proposing will ensure smart growth in the region. This means promoting compact, vibrant communities that support jobs and public transit, and reward us with an expanded greenbelt. These changes are designed to keep goods and people moving in the region efficiently, protect suitable

lands for new and expanding businesses, make sure farms continue to flourish, reduce the negative impacts of climate change and further enhance the protection of precious natural areas. Together, these are major steps in boosting our economy, furthering smart, sustainable living, and protecting our environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I appreciate the minister's answer. Confronting these challenges in how we shape communities in this province is an historic step for Ontario. These changes demonstrate that the government remains committed to growing the greenbelt and is putting an end to urban sprawl in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

Since its inception, this review has always been grounded in engagement with Ontarians, who clearly have a passion for the future of their communities. This stage of the process is no different. Ontarians will now have a further opportunity to weigh in on these proposed changes to the province's land use plan and to continue to have their voices heard.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister share with the House what the next steps in the review process will be?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I sure can, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to do so after the great work that the honourable David Crombie and his team did coming in with 87 recommendations, and they did what I thought was the impossible: come in with absolute consensus.

We're going through a second stage of consultation. There will be public open houses that will be held across the greater Golden Horseshoe. We'll also be taking input through the Environmental Registry and our ministry website. It's important that we all work together to get things right. We're going to ensure that that happens.

I'm very proud—in fact, we should all be proud in this House—of the work our government has done to grow our award-winning greenbelt, curb urban sprawl and create complete communities for us all to live, work and raise our families in. Great stuff.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before we dismiss, I just want to take a moment to offer a reminder to the House. There seems to be some misunderstanding of speaking to the Chair. You do not speak to the member on either side. You're speaking to the Chair. Whoever is in the chair is receiving your question and receiving your answer. It doesn't matter if you are looking at me, but it's helpful to remember it by looking at the Chair. You can put the question to the person opposite, and you can put the answer to the person opposite, without it being a conversation back and forth. I'm going to ask you to keep that in mind.

The second thing I want to bring to your attention is—and I've asked for this plenty of times and continue to hear it; it's almost an affront to what I'm asking you to do, so I'm almost taking it personally as the Speaker—

when I ask you not to use their names. Even in the heckling, it's happening more and more. I'm asking for it to stop. I'm going to ask this time to simply say the member's title or the member's riding. It would be extremely helpful in debate and inside of the decorum in this House.

There are no deferred votes. This House—sorry. Point of order: the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Point of order, Speaker: I know that everyone in the House will want to join me in congratulating the London Knights on winning the OHL championship and wishing them the very, very best as they move on to win the Memorial Cup.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank you for that opening for the deputy House leader for a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: Some of us will dissent from that.

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The cabinet is now divided, as you can see. The cabinet is divided. Those of us from the Niagara region do not join in the congratulations. We do congratulate the Niagara IceDogs on their fine performance throughout the playoffs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. That would definitely get us started with each of our ridings, so I'm just going to say that there are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On behalf of my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, I'd like to welcome sincerely, from the Bruce Peninsula Association for Community Living, Vickie Ellis, Cody Bell, Diane Chavarie, Deb Smith and Michele Bell. A warm welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome Steven Sherwood from my riding of Toronto–Danforth here to see statement period today.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would like to recognize Marie Perrotta and her husband, Francis Hare, who are here at Queen's Park to listen to my member's statement.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to introduce Wendy Preskow, founder of the National Initiative for Eating Disorders, who is here to watch our debate on my private member's bill.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 547

Mrs. Julia Munro: It is my pleasure today to rise and speak about an upcoming awards ceremony that the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 547 is hosting in my riding of York–Simcoe.

This year, the honour and awards dinner is being held to honour the past achievements of members and those in the past year who have contributed to the welfare of the branch and the Legion. Branch 547 will be recognizing Donald Janes, Harry McKenzie and Norman Knowles for their 45 years of uninterrupted service, and will also be recognizing Kenneth Coston for his 50 years of uninterrupted service.

I want to just make note of the fact that following right after VE day last week, it's fitting that we are demonstrating the vibrancy and the commitment that continue to be maintained throughout our communities through the Royal Canadian Legion.

I look forward to getting together in June for D-Day.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to read today from a speech about the autism cuts, given by my constituent Steven Sherwood at a rally here on May 5. He said:

"The Ontario government is playing a political shell game, justified by trying to balance the budget on the backs of some of the most vulnerable children in our province. This is unacceptable. This is disgusting."

"Peter"—his son—"has been waiting to receive IBI treatment for almost two years, and while our son will likely receive some therapy under the existing IBI program, he will age out within weeks of starting. He is an incredible child, and is full of potential, but he needs intensive therapy like IBI to help him to discover his voice and be given the chance to thrive."

"Bottom line ... This program change will eliminate access to intensive services like IBI for the vast majority of Ontario's autistic children who qualify for it. How can a policy change like this be allowed to continue?"

"The government needs to go back to the drawing board and come up with a better plan."

I want to thank Mr. Sherwood and all of the parents who have spoken out, organized and rallied on behalf of their children. I want to thank my colleague Monique Taylor, who has been such a strong voice in defence of these children and these families in this Legislature.

Again, I want to add to their voices. The government has to change course. It has to protect these children, not cut them off the waiting list.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Before I recognize the member for Beaches–East York, I want to remind all the members that we address each other by the riding.

MARIE PERROTTA

Mr. Arthur Potts: Today I would like to recognize the Pegasus organization and Marie Perrotta, one of the founding directors of the organization. I would like to take the opportunity to recognize her two decades of service as executive director and thank her for her leadership in our community.

Ms. Perrotta was on the founding board when it was first established in 1994. Pegasus was established to ensure that those with developmental disabilities were supported through adulthood and able to be meaningfully involved in their communities.

As a group of parents and professionals, the founders of Pegasus were concerned for the future of their children and other children as they grew into young adults who did not have any support programs to assist them after the age of 21. Marie recognized a need in the community, and she helped establish four community sites that serve this population of our community.

Marie is very active in other aspects of our community and has worked tirelessly to ensure that government and the community were well aware of this unique situation.

Ms. Perrotta's impact on Beaches–East York and the greater Toronto community through Pegasus has been far-reaching. This special group of people have administered the programming at Pegasus since 1994 and have worked tirelessly to ensure that these programs are run efficiently and smoothly to ensure their success.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Ms. Perrotta, Pegasus organization, all their board of directors and all the volunteers for the work that they do in our community. Her hard work, mentorship, recruitment of volunteers etc. helps grow and sustain the volunteer community of Pegasus—and her humility, as she consistently wants to give others credit for the hard work she does.

I'd ask fellow members to join me in congratulating this exceptional community leader and wishing her and her husband, Francis, all the best in their next endeavours.

MANUFACTURING SUMMIT

Mr. Michael Harris: On Tuesday, almost 300 attendees and 30 exhibitors gathered in my region for the fifth annual Manufacturing Summit hosted by the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.

The summit is held as a way to bring the manufacturing and supply chain community together. This half-day conference has grown year after year, with useful breakout sessions and informative keynote speakers. It also doubles as a great opportunity to share with people in the region the importance of manufacturing. In fact, one in five jobs are in the manufacturing or supply chain sector in the region of Waterloo. It's about 20% of our local economic outlook.

This was not always the case, however. In 2008, sales for Canadian manufacturers dropped by 30% and exports to the United States fell by 35%.

Ontario's manufacturing sector is in the midst of a significant transformation as industry leaders retool, reinvent and rethink their businesses for maximum competitiveness, performance and growth. Never have the challenges been more significant nor the opportunities more numerous for Ontario manufacturers.

In fact, on Tuesday, two manufacturers in my riding—Ontario Drive and Gear as well as Kuntz Electro-

plating—were featured at the summit. Michael Kuntz of Kuntz Electroplating spoke at Tuesday's summit, saying, "Failure to adapt and evolve will lead to failure. Resilience, innovation, agility and adaptability are essential qualities for any successful manufacturer today."

Speaker, I'm proud to host businesses with these qualities in my region.

RONALD McDONALD HOUSE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Last week, down in Windsor, we opened the first Ronald McDonald House in Canada to be located within a hospital. It's the 15th Ronald McDonald House in Canada. There are now 357 of them around the world.

I want to give a big shout-out to McDonald's, to the Ronald McDonald House Charities and to our hard-working staff and board of directors at Windsor Regional Hospital.

This brand new, seven-bedroom home on the third floor of Met campus cost more than \$1.5 million. It started with a dream that a friend of mine had about seven years ago. Paul Couvillon's granddaughter Miranda was born two months premature. She stayed at a neonatal unit at a hospital in Detroit. The Couvillons were treated like royalty at the Ronald McDonald House there.

Until now, our other options were London or Toronto. Actually, 26% of the families who stay at the Ronald McDonald House in London are from the Windsor area.

Windsor's new Ronald McDonald House will cater to the families of more than 400 babies who are at Met's neonatal intensive care unit each year. I think they should call that "the peekaboo ICU."

Thank you to Lou-Anne Farrell, the president of the board for the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southwestern Ontario; to Margaret Anderson, the executive director; and to Cathy Loblaw, the president and CEO of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Canada.

Our new facility will help families deal with the stress that comes with having a premature baby just around the corner in the neonatal ICU.

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NURSING WEEK

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I am honoured today to stand as a nurse and a member of this government to mark Nursing Week today, May 12, which is Florence Nightingale's birthday.

Nurses are proud of their valued profession, their skills and role as skilled care providers and patient advocates. We celebrate the dedication, knowledge and skills that nurses possess and the challenges that they sometimes face as they provide quality, compassionate care.

This year the Ontario Nurses' Association, ONA, has chosen the theme "We are Ontario's nurses. Nurses know."

Nurses know how valuable their care is in ensuring that patients have the best possible health outcomes. The value of proper RN staffing cannot be overstated, especially for acutely ill patients in hospitals. RN care means a lower incidence of patient complications and, therefore, saves the system money in the long run. Nurses know that every patient deserves the best quality care possible, and they work diligently to make Ontario's health care system even better.

Yesterday, I was pleased to meet with members of ONA from my region, and tomorrow I will be visiting my former workplace, Cambridge Memorial Hospital, as part of Nursing Week.

ONA represents 60,000 registered nurses and allied health professionals, as well as more than 14,000 nursing student affiliates, who provide care in hospitals, long-term care, the community, public health, clinics and industry. I want to thank them and all my sisters and brothers in nursing for all of the work that they do each and every day.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to take this opportunity to speak about age-friendly communities. I'm sorry that the minister responsible for seniors is not in the House this afternoon to hear this.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I remind the member that we do not address members who are not present. Attendance is not acceptable to talk about.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I understand. Thank you.

As many here know, seniors are the fastest-growing age group in Canada. As a former employee of the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, I know that an important part of being an age-friendly community is supporting policies, programs, services and environments which help people remain active as they age. Accessible and affordable environments that support people's needs can allow older people to stay in their homes without facing the challenges of isolation, immobility and loss of independence.

I want to salute the town of Whitby, in my riding, which is developing an action plan, in collaboration with major seniors' organizations in the province, to become an age-friendly community.

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to recognize all Ontario volunteers. Whether it's by helping with newcomer settlement, spending Sundays with seniors at a retirement home, organizing cultural events or coaching a children's soccer team, volunteers make invaluable contributions to our compassionate and vibrant province. They do so without pay and without any expectation of recognition. Each year in Ontario, almost five million volunteers contribute almost 860 million volunteer hours.

It's important that we acknowledge the selfless work of Ontario's volunteers. That's why the Ministry of

Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade implemented its annual volunteer service awards program. This year, the ministry will hold over 50 ceremonies across the province to celebrate the contributions of volunteers. These people are a vital resource for our communities. Their efforts inspire others to share their time and skills.

Over the past three evenings, I've had the pleasure to personally congratulate and thank many of these volunteers, many from Toronto and the surrounding areas.

I'm proud to have many active and engaged volunteer-based organizations in my own riding of Davenport, and I want to congratulate the 136 volunteers who, this year, were recognized with a volunteer service award. The work that these groups do has a tremendous impact on the quality of life for thousands of residents of Davenport.

I'm very proud that our government recognizes the importance of volunteering, and I'm very proud of the theme for this year: "Volunteers, the Heart of our Community."

BLADDER CANCER

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I rise to recognize the month of May as Bladder Cancer Awareness Month and the good work of Bladder Cancer Canada—and this is coming from both a doctor as well as a nurse, my colleague the MPP from Cambridge.

This form of cancer currently affects about 80,000 Canadians. It's the fifth most common cancer overall—fourth for men, 12th for women—with unfortunately more than 8,000 new diagnoses annually.

Annual fundraising walks by Bladder Cancer Canada are held in 20 cities across the country.

Founded by two bladder cancer survivors, David Guttman and Jack Moon, and currently headed by executive director Tammy Northam, Bladder Cancer Canada is a nationally registered Canadian charity supported by a medical advisory board and a medical research board consisting of the top bladder cancer specialists across the country.

Speaker, if I might use this opportunity as a physician—and nurse, in tandem—the most common symptom of bladder cancer is unfortunately blood in the urine or, as we call it, hematuria, occurring in more than 80% of cases. Other symptoms may include bladder spasms, increased frequency and urgency of urination, and a burning sensation during urination. Smoking is a common risk factor—a universal evil, as all doctors know, and as you, Speaker, as a nurse, will know yourself—and age and occupational exposure to specific chemicals. Generally we will, of course, assess at the family doc level and then refer on for other treatments and examinations such as cystoscopy.

Speaker, once again, with your permission, I salute Bladder Cancer Canada and their excellent work. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I thank all the members.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I rise on a point of order. They weren't here when we were doing the introduction of guests, so I would beg your indulgence, but I would like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature my friends from Community Living Chatham-Kent who are here visiting us at Queen's Park. Starting at the left and working to the right, we have Wayne Easterbrook, Tod Kane, Charlie Beintema, Dave Bromley and Randy Renaud. Welcome, gentlemen, to Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We welcome all our guests.

Also, the time for members' statements is finished.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

IMMUNIZATION OF SCHOOL PUPILS AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'IMMUNISATION DES ÉLÈVES

Mr. Hoskins moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act to amend the Immunization of School Pupils Act / Projet de loi 198, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'immunisation des élèves.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, would you like to make a short statement?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly would. This act amends the Immunization of School Pupils Act to require parents to complete an immunization education session before filing a statement of conscience or religious belief, to expand the categories of persons who may provide statements regarding the administration of immunization agents and, lastly, to require those who administer immunizing agents to provide information to the local medical officer of health.

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd just like to introduce Chris Beesley, who is from Community Living Ontario. We worked together in the literacy sector. I'd like to welcome him to the Legislature today.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Madam Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the establishment of a panel to draft a code of conduct for members of provincial Parliament.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is there unanimous consent for the motion? Agreed? Agreed.

Deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that a panel be established to draft a code of conduct for members of provincial Parliament in the province of Ontario; and

That the panel be composed of one member from each recognized party, and be chaired by the Speaker; and

That the panel should ensure that the code of conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following principles:

—Promote a safe, secure and respectful work environment that is free from harassment, intimidation and bullying;

—Set out guidance for conduct by or against members as they conduct their work in the legislative precinct, in their ridings, or any other venue where they are conducting business as MPPs;

—Include mechanisms for addressing complaints; and

—Suggest training and education initiatives;

That, once complete, the Speaker shall lay the report of the panel before the assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Bradley has moved that a panel be established to draft a code of conduct—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Dispense? Agreed? Agreed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY JOURNÉE DE L'INTÉGRATION COMMUNAUTAIRE

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Today is Community Living Day, and it gives me great pleasure to welcome our guests from Community Living Ontario and many of its local agencies from across the province. We have been joined by Chris Beesley, chief executive officer of Community Living Ontario; Brad Saunders, the CEO of Community Living Toronto; Hélène Morin-Chain, president of Community Living Ontario; James Taylor, council chair of Community Living Ontario; Gord Kyle, director of policy; and Jo-Anne Demick, the executive director of Community Living Parry Sound.

I would also like to acknowledge that May is Community Living Month. In honour of this month, the CN

Tower was lit up last night with green and blue to shine a light on Community Living and the message of inclusion for everyone.

For 63 years, Community Living organizations have been true leaders in advocating for people with developmental disabilities. It started with the families who formed the original Community Living movement to fight for their children's right to attend public school. The movement soon expanded into one that championed the rights of all individuals with developmental disabilities to be equal participants in their communities.

Today, there are 12,000 members in more than 100 local Community Living associations.

Family is and has always been at the heart of what the movement is about. La famille est, et a toujours été, au cœur du mouvement.

I am always humbled by the personal commitment and caring I see when I meet with community living organizations. Je suis toujours impressionnée par l'engagement personnel et la compassion que j'observe lorsque je rencontre des représentants des organisations Community Living.

Inspired by this movement, we are working with Community Living organizations and other partners to transform the developmental services system into one that is more accessible, fair and sustainable.

Let me also recognize Community Living London, Community Living Brant and Community Living Algonia, who are leading the way in transitioning away from sheltered workshops towards inclusive, person-centred supports in the community and effective individualized employment supports, and in sharing their stories with other agencies on the transition journey.

Independence, inclusion and choice are the core principles behind our three-year, \$810-million investment strategy for community and developmental services. My ministry has just completed year two of this investment and, together with our partners, we have already made tremendous strides in helping thousands of Ontarians. Approximately 15,200 people and their families are getting new direct funding so they can choose the programs that will help them achieve their goals. We have provided Passport funding to approximately 7,200 people since 2014. We have eliminated the Special Services at Home program wait-list more than a year ahead of schedule. We have funded new residential supports to more than 800 individuals—more than halfway to our target.

Over the next year, along with our partner ministries, we will also develop a provincial employment strategy for people with disabilities. We want to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities by helping them connect to the labour market and by engaging and supporting employers. Providing increased choice and greater community inclusion is key to our efforts.

We know that tackling issues facing families in the developmental services sector is not just about more funding. We are working to make our employment support programs more effective to help people get real jobs

in their community. Nous nous efforçons de rendre nos programmes de soutien de l'emploi plus efficaces pour aider les gens à trouver des emplois réels dans leur communauté.

For people who choose to work, we want them to have real work for real pay. Pour ceux qui choisissent de travailler, nous voulons qu'ils trouvent un vrai emploi réellement rémunéré.

I would like to commend the Community Living movement for their support as we work together on this. Je tiens à remercier le mouvement des organisations Community Living de leur collaboration à nos efforts communs vers l'atteinte de cet objectif.

As we continue to transform the developmental services system, we look to our partners to help make Ontario a more inclusive province.

None of this would be possible without the drive and inspiration of the families and caring individuals in the Community Living movement.

Madam Speaker, I invite all members on both sides of the House to join me in recognizing the vital and important work of the thousands of Ontarians who are proud champions of Community Living Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Responses?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today is Community Living Day at Queen's Park. We have many representatives from Community Living Ontario and Community Living agencies across the province. I would like to welcome all of them to the Legislature and thank them personally for the great chocolate bars we got at the reception today.

Our Community Living agencies promote inclusion, citizenship and equality for people who have an intellectual disability. I'm inspired by Community Living's mission to create a world where people with an intellectual disability can fully participate in their community because they are included in decisions and considered citizens. I know that Community Living works towards this mission every day and their results are invaluable for so many individuals and families.

Among the many programs offered by Community Living agencies are housing supports, employment support and day programs. These services help to provide independence for individuals with disabilities and are an important part of the developmental services sector.

Over the last few months, we have been working hard to voice the concerns of the sector and the families that Community Living agencies serve. At top of mind are the closures of sheltered workshops, many of which are run by Community Living, pay equity issues and the availability of housing.

I have heard from families across the province who are extremely concerned about these government plans. Many fear that this will compromise the work and social opportunities that are so important for the individuals who work at these places. What we need and what we have been asking for since the initial announcement in December is a detailed transition plan and a consultation period.

In line with the mission of Community Living, everyone deserves to have their feedback and advice heard on this important policy issue. I remain disappointed that the government has not committed to a formal consultation period and that they have still refused to provide a detailed transition plan. Individual families and agencies deserve better.

I also remain concerned about the availability of housing for individuals with disabilities. Community Living has gone above and beyond to provide inclusive housing opportunities. They need a partner in this government to ensure that everyone who wants to live with independence has the opportunity to do so.

In Perth-Wellington, we are lucky enough to have a number of Community Living agencies. I would like to recognize the staff at Community Living St. Marys, Community Living Stratford, Community Living North Perth and Community Living Guelph Wellington. I had the opportunity to visit these agencies, and I frequently meet with families who rely on the important resources that Community Living provides.

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To the staff at Community Living agencies, we say thank you. Your commitment to inclusive and independent living has improved the lives of so many. To the families who support their loved ones, we recognize your hard work and your tireless commitment each and every day. And to all of those who are visiting today and are a part of the Community Living family, thank you for your outstanding citizenship and for sharing your stories.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to extend a warm welcome to the many people with Community Living Ontario who are here at Queen's Park, joining us today. I'm always proud to stand in the Ontario Legislature on behalf of my constituents of Kenora-Rainy River. On behalf of New Democrats and Andrea Horwath, it's my pleasure to rise and speak today in celebration of Community Living Day.

For over 60 years, Community Living Ontario has advocated for people with intellectual disabilities to be fully included in all aspects of community life so that all people are able to live with dignity, share in all elements of living in our communities and have the opportunity to be better enabled to fully participate.

I was proud to have attended the reception earlier this afternoon with many of my MPP colleagues to help celebrate the achievements of Community Living Ontario. I also had the pleasure to meet with so many individuals who had come from across the province and who continue to receive the services that Community Living offers, and I was able to hear their stories.

In my riding of Kenora-Rainy River, I'm proud of Community Living Ontario and the work that it does to provide services to the residents of Fort Frances and Dryden. The excellent support staff is part of a dynamic team of individuals who work at these two locations. I'm looking forward to seeing and meeting many of these individuals in the coming months.

I'd like to highlight some of the outstanding services that Community Living Fort Frances and Dryden provide. Employment supports are provided so that each person can live their life to the fullest. Individuals are offered ongoing training and support, which will facilitate either paid employment or unpaid placements which are consistent with the goals and the needs of the individual. While the emphasis may not necessarily be on competitive employment, it includes satisfying work alternatives reflective of individual interests.

They also provide 24-hour supports. This is a comprehensive service for people with long-term and intensive support and care needs. The level of supervision is high and is geared towards each person's skills and abilities. In-home and out-of-home supports are provided in a wide variety of areas, such as personal health and safety, mobility, household maintenance and transportation.

Finally, leisure activities are also available. Through the use of technology, people are offered a range of experiences, including sports, education and literacy, life skills, physical therapy, music therapy, vocational skills, stretching and relaxation.

Speaker, as you can see, Community Living Ontario provides a range of programs and supports to those living with intellectual disabilities. I support Community Living Ontario and the 100 branches across the province as they continue with their strong advocacy for clients, to ensure that we all have inclusive communities in Ontario.

However, Speaker, there is still much more that needs to be done. I had the opportunity, as I mentioned, to speak with a number of people at the Community Living reception. They told me time and time again that there are real challenges in this province with the shelter allowance with ODSP. It comes in at less than \$500 a month and many areas that were represented at the reception told me that the market rent can be in excess of \$700, on average, to \$900 or more, depending on where they're living. What that means is, if they're taking money away from the rest of the money that they have to pay for their shelter, there's less money for food. It means an increased reliance on food banks and it also means a life that is doomed to poverty.

We have to change those things. We need to have more affordable housing units across this province and we need to have real employment opportunities. That was something that people had talked about time and time again: "I want to work. I am capable of working. Let me go out and work. I just need a job." There is a lot more work we need to do on that front.

We know the fantastic work that Community Living Ontario does, but this work is simply not possible if there's limited funding and a lack of other supports from the provincial government.

I'd like to conclude my remarks by thanking the organizers of the reception today as well as the individuals sitting here in the galleries. Thank you so much for travelling across Ontario to come here and join us today and share your stories.

I thank Community Living Ontario and all of its member organizations for the outstanding work that they do every day.

PETITIONS

APRAXIA

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all children in the province of Ontario deserve every opportunity to reach their full potential; and

"Whereas speech and language pathologists in Ontario are afforded the capabilities to provide a diagnosis of childhood apraxia of speech and receive specialized mandated training; and

"Whereas intensive and frequent individualized professional speech therapy, multiple times weekly, is needed to facilitate verbal speech; and

"Whereas school-aged children with severe and significant speech and language disorders like childhood apraxia of speech are not receiving the quality or quantity of speech therapy outlined as essential by current evidence and research, by either CCACs or school boards;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government of Ontario to declare that May 14 is Apraxia Awareness Day."

I completely agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Spencer.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is called "Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care," and these are signatures from across the province.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give these petitions to page Emma.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled “Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation.” I'd like to recognize Hamid John, a registered dental hygienist, for collecting these hundreds of signatures and sending them in. It reads as follows:

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

“Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led directly to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament.”

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and I'll send it down with page Julia.

AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS

Mr. Lorne Coe: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Bill 152, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2015 is a vital tool that supports Ontario's auto sector by cutting red tape for dealers and consumers when a vehicle is purchased or leased; and

“Whereas, in 2011, the province of Ontario conducted a pilot project on in-house vehicle licensing at two new car dealerships that was well received by the participants; and

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“Whereas the province of Quebec has permitted automobile dealers to conduct in-house vehicle registrations since 2003, with 700 dealers currently participating;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario immediately pass Bill 152 into law, to promote Ontario's auto retail sector by cutting red tape for motor vehicle dealers and consumers to save them time and money.”

I agree with the content. I'll affix my signature to it and provide it to page Brendan.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here.

“Don't Balance the Budget on the Backs of Children with ASD.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention (IBI); and

“Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

“Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

“Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

“Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government;

“Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

“Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation.”

I support this wholeheartedly, affix my name and send it with page Laura.

TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait plaisir d'apporter une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

« Attendu qu'il y a un besoin criant en infrastructure de transport routier dans la province de l'Ontario;

« Attendu que d'offrir différentes alternatives ou options dans le choix du mode de transport aux citoyens aide à réduire le nombre de voitures sur les routes;

« Attendu que les transports en commun contribuent à améliorer la qualité de vie des Ontariens ainsi qu'à préserver l'environnement;

« Attendu que les résidents d'Orléans et de l'est d'Ottawa ont besoin d'une plus grande infrastructure de transport;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Soutenir le plan Faire progresser l'Ontario et la construction de la phase II du train léger sur rail (TLR), ce qui contribuera à répondre aux besoins criants en infrastructure de transport à Orléans, à l'est d'Ottawa et à travers la province. »

Il me fait plaisir de signer cette pétition et de la remettre au page Spencer.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

"Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can't afford to pay more;

"Whereas Ontario's businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

"Whereas the recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

"Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

I support this petition as well and affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

"Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics."

I wholeheartedly support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Ayana.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Granville Anderson: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of the municipality of Clarington have been promised that the GO train would be extended to Courtice and Bowmanville;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario keep its promise to Clarington residents and commit to providing the necessary funding for Metrolinx to complete the extension of the GO train to Courtice and Bowmanville no later than 2018."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Brendan.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: "Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

As I am in favour, I affix my signature and give it to page Spencer.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government has cancelled the Northlander passenger train which served the residents of northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas the provincial government has closed bus stations and is cancelling bus routes despite promising enhanced bus services to replace the train; and

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) has been given a mandate that its motor coach division must be self-sustaining; and

"Whereas Metrolinx, the crown corporation that provides train and bus service in the GTA ... is subsidized by more than \$100 million annually; and

"Whereas the subsidy to Metrolinx has increased annually for the last seven years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to reverse the decision to cancel bus routes immediately and to treat northerners equitably in decisions regarding public transportation."

I wholeheartedly agree and send it down with page Samuel.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition regarding hydro.

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come"—of course, what's left to continue to own publicly.

I'm going to give this to Julia to deliver to the table.

1350

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

EATING DISORDERS AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA SENSIBILISATION AUX TROUBLES DE L'ALIMENTATION

Mr. Thibeault moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 189, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week / Projet de loi 189, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sensibilisation aux troubles de l'alimentation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm honoured to be able to rise and speak to my private member's bill, Bill 189, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week in the first week of February of every year. I think it's important to recognize that this awareness week is just the start of what we need to do with addressing eating disorders in our province and right across the country.

I know that we also have a national awareness week and that British Columbia has legislated an Eating Disorders Awareness Week, from February 1 to 7 of each year. So I'm very honoured to be able to stand and bring forward this bill to try and create the same awareness week here in Ontario.

Before I continue with my speech, I think it's very important that I acknowledge several individuals who were extremely helpful in helping me bring forward this bill and with providing information. One of them is here in the members' gallery: Wendy Preskow, founder of the National Initiative for Eating Disorders. Wendy, thank you for all your insight. Also with us today—there were quite a few of people in the media studio with us, so I'd just like to go through this list: Wendy's husband, Len; Lynne Koss, who was helpful; Dr. Blake Woodside; Dr. Debra Katzman; Dr. Karen Fleming; Marlene Sachs; Suzanne Phillips, from the National Eating Disorder Information Centre; Marbella Carlos, from the same centre; and Don Seymour, the chief executive officer of Addiction and Mental Health Services—Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington, who I know is also here. I know that my colleague from Kingston will be speaking a little later as well.

This all stems from, I would say, a constituent of mine in the riding of Sudbury. A young single mother came to my office and asked to meet with me because she needed some help. In that meeting, she identified that she had an eating disorder and that she was able to seek treatment in the past and she was able to get the help that she needed. But now she was feeling a lot of those symptoms coming

back. As a young single mother, she wanted to make sure that she could get in and change those feelings, those temptations that she was having, a lot earlier.

That's when I realized that I was there to try to help, but I really didn't know enough about eating disorders. So starting to make some calls on her behalf, it was interesting for me to find that many health care professionals and many professionals in our communities don't have the facts, don't understand and don't know about eating disorders.

That's when we were starting to reach out to Health Sciences North in Sudbury, which has an eating disorder clinic. If I can, I'd just like to take a couple of seconds to acknowledge the great work that Health Sciences North and that clinic do on a daily basis. We also reached out to the Canadian Mental Health Association and spoke with them. They also provided some advice and some feedback on what we could do to help this young single mother.

I also realized, as you start talking to people about them, that there are many myths out there about eating disorders. Some of them are: This only affects wealthy white women; this is about vanity; and you can just tell people to eat and this will change this disorder. But the fact is that eating disorders affect men and women of all backgrounds, of all ages, of all ethnicities, sexual orientations and incomes. It truly is a mental health issue.

I know we talk in this House often about ending the stigma, about ending much of the stigmas that are out there to ensure that we can start talking openly about this, to make sure that we're aware—as politicians, as health care professionals, as parents—of what the symptoms are, but also what the treatments are. Those who are suffering from eating disorders—it also affects the parents, the siblings, the spouses, the friends and the caregivers.

One of the things I think is also important to recognize and to acknowledge is that eating disorders are a very serious and often deadly mental illness. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental health issue. On average, 10% of sufferers will die within 10 years of developing an eating disorder. The numbers range to as high as a 15% mortality rate for anorexia nervosa. Once in treatment, the average time for recovery from an eating disorder is still long; it's between two and seven years. Only 50% of individuals fully recover, meaning half of individuals with eating disorders live with the illness until they die, often very prematurely.

In 2013, the House of Commons—our friends in Ottawa—Standing Committee on the Status of Women agreed to study eating disorders among Canadian women and girls. The results of that 2014 report, based on testimony from 27 witnesses, outlined the barriers to addressing eating disorders in Canada, the first of which was a lack of awareness. I'm very pleased today to be able to stand and talk about Bill 189, because Bill 189 is doing just that. It's seeking to raise the profile of eating disorders in Ontario.

We want to spread awareness among the general public; we want to educate professionals engaged in

treating eating disorders. Right now, we see insufficient training on eating disorder treatment among medical professionals, counsellors and others in that health care sector. We also want to, of course, increase media literacy around this issue because, as mentioned, for too many people, eating disorders are seen as a choice, a disease of vain middle-class adolescent girls. This is misinformation. It's stereotyping, and that's exactly what we need to do by spreading awareness: end this stereotyping.

Our society has made significant strides towards countering the stigma of mental illness. Bell Let's Talk is an important, important campaign. I know in my riding of Sudbury, back in early February, we had a Bell Let's Talk session at the Steelworkers hall. We had three or four great speakers, and one of them was Michael Landsberg from TSN. He was talking about #sicknotweak. He has a great campaign under way right now, recognizing that we can change the stigma, and we can change that stigma by awareness. That's what this bill doing.

Statistics tell us that between 600,000 and 900,000 Canadians suffer from eating disorders at any time in our country. Some 0.5% of our population, or approximately 150,000 Canadians, currently suffer from anorexia; 1%, or roughly 300,000 Canadians, suffer from bulimia. However, we know the statistics are likely flawed, as they only account for people who seek treatment for eating disorders. It's only accounting for the people who seek treatment. The real number is probably much, much higher.

In order to better address this issue, we need to get better statistics, and part of that depends on creating a safe place for people to seek treatment. For that to happen, we need to raise awareness, lead by example and counter the stigma. Greater awareness has a role to play in prevention and early intervention of eating disorders, and early intervention is helpful.

1400

One thing we can do is prepare our educators—our schools—more fully. Make teachers more aware of early symptoms of eating disorders and how best to address them. This morning in the media studio, Dr. Debra Katzman, who is a pediatrician—and, I know, many, many other things; she has a very long title of qualifications—was talking about how we're seeing a higher prevalence of eating disorders in our children. Madam Speaker, she's now talking about children three years old. A three-year-old child can have an eating disorder. While many of us might not recognize the symptoms, because we're not aware of this, I'm hoping that this bill will start that process, will start with the steps for us to be able to start recognizing many of the things our health care professionals were telling us this morning when we launched this. Madam Speaker, if we're looking at our school system, the responsibility is not solely on teachers. We need to help parents and caregivers understand how to encourage healthy body image as well.

I know that I'm running out of time, and I know there are many other members who are going to speak to this. As I conclude, I think it's important to recognize that

awareness is not the solution to the issue around eating disorders, but it is a necessary first step. We need to build awareness to counter misinformation, we need to build awareness to end the stereotyping and stigma experienced by eating disorder sufferers, and we need to build awareness to help people feel comfortable seeking help and to prepare caregivers to provide the most effective support possible.

We're always hopeful that this bill will contribute to greater awareness. As I wrap up, Madam Speaker, I again want to thank Wendy Preskow for her constant advocacy on this. I know, as the parent of a daughter, that this is an important first step. I am just honoured to be able to have worked with you and your group. As we keep saying, this is our first step. But we'll work with you as you move forward on our next steps.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It was my honour to speak to this.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to acknowledge and thank the member opposite for allowing me to speak. I really appreciate this.

I'm proud to rise today and speak about my colleague's important bill, Bill 189, the Eating Disorders Awareness Week Act. Madam Speaker, we've come a long way in recent years in recognizing mental illness. As my colleague said, the Bell Let's Talk campaign has been tremendous in lifting the stigma around depression and allowing people to be open about their depression. We in this House also passed the PTSD legislation, which will help first responders access the resources they need to help them. All these initiatives have raised these issues and brought them into public discourse, and I'm proud that I was able to be here for the passage of the PTSD legislation.

As we shed light on mental illness, we must also shed light on eating disorders. Eating disorders are a prevalent illness in our image-obsessed society, and we must recognize the following facts: In a 2002 survey, 28% of girls in grade 9 and 29% of girls in grade 10 engaged in weight loss behaviours. These numbers show the impact of eating disorders on our adolescents. And it's not just our youth who are impacted by this illness. Adults are all too often drawn into unhealthy weight loss and dieting. The impact of this is silent, but it affects so many people who suffer in silence. Whether it is our youth, who are bullied for being perceived as fat, or the hypersensitivity of both females and males to fit into a mould of what constitutes attractive or normal, anorexia, bulimia and all eating disorders are fought by so many people.

In fact, Madam Speaker—and I asked permission to do this—my daughter suffered with an eating disorder. I have seen first-hand what it can do to a person and the mental and physical toll it takes. My daughter has been struggling since she was 11 years old, and it's only been three years, at the age of 20, that I can officially say that my daughter has overcome engaging in harmful dieting practices and this troubling aspect of her life. So I

understand what it can be—it may not be as significant as Wendy—to be a parent with a child who suffers from an eating disorder.

For a very long time, I was in the dark about my daughter's eating disorder. It's only after I caught her first-hand in a bulimic episode at the age of 14 that I realized how severe this issue was. As a parent with a child who suffers from an eating disorder, I understand the importance of learning about the signs and how to help our children with this illness. While I don't want to trivialize my daughter's experience, I also want to say that I know there are cases where significant intervention is required, and potentially hospitalization for severe weight loss.

We need to increase awareness of this illness so that females and males—adults and youth—are comfortable admitting they need help. Like depression, we need to be open about the silent challenges and illnesses affecting so many in our society and we need to encourage those who suffer to seek support.

So Madam Speaker, let's start talking about this illness and allowing people the space to admit they suffer. I am proud that my daughter was able to overcome this illness and I want to live in a society where people who suffer are completely comfortable to break their silence and seek out help.

In closing, we have come far in accepting mental illness as an illness and have started to build a society where it is okay to seek help. To all the children and youth of our province, please don't be ashamed that you are seeking help for something that could potentially destroy you.

Thank you to the member from Sudbury for moving such an important private member's bill and starting this important conversation. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 189. Eating disorders are complex illnesses that, for many families, can have devastating physical and psychological impacts on their lives. I've spoken previously about the great services offered by Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences and about the positive impact that this wonderful Whitby facility has had on the lives of so many in Durham region.

In 2014, Speaker, the facility opened its new child and adolescent Eating Disorders Unit. The program offers an inter-professional model of care which includes individual as well as family and group therapy sessions. There's also a focus on education, eating rehabilitation and pharmacological treatment. It's an all-encompassing program. Ontario Shores is in a unique position to examine and execute treatments and programs for mental illnesses. Its eating disorder program development identifies clearly the complexity and enormity of the problem, and establishes a broad spectrum of therapies that are being used to treat them.

Prior to 2014, Speaker, patients and families had to access treatment outside of the country. All of this

changed when the first residential eating disorders program in Ontario opened its doors at Ontario Shores. The unit is open to children between 12 and 18 from across the province who are currently attending or are eligible to attend school, where no sustained recovery was evident thereby requiring an intensive treatment setting, have a local health care provider or team, and who are medically stable.

The program even has its own recovery high school. It's composed of mandatory elements; selectives representing four areas of brain function; electives; and volunteer work. At present, the program has 12 in-patients. Between April 2015 and March 2016, there were 20 admissions, 19 discharges and only one re-admission.

It's important, Speaker, that Ontarians realize that this problem is real and that they receive sufficient education to identify healthy diets and proper eating habits. But more importantly, for those families impacted, they must understand that eating disorders are a psychiatric illness, not simply poor dietary choices. If, by making this declaration, we can help bring eating disorders out from the darkness and into the light, then we're doing an enormous favour for so many families who suffer deeply but quietly. And to all, we can bring a more complete awareness of this illness.

I'm pleased to support this bill.

1410

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm glad the member opposite has created this opportunity for us to have a conversation in this Legislature about eating disorders.

Eating disorders, as has been said, are unfortunately often misunderstood to be a choice, but they are not at all. Eating disorders are a serious and potentially life-threatening mental illness. They are not a lifestyle; they are not a diet. They cannot be willed away.

An awareness week like the one my colleague across the floor has proposed would certainly help bring these disorders to light and start a broader discussion about the complexity and the prevalence of eating disorders in Ontario. Awareness is crucial to combatting stigma and stereotypes, which is why it has been so successful in other national awareness weeks.

What's most important, I think, is that people need to understand those who suffer. They need to understand that there is no shame in asking for help, but we need to go further than just talking. Those people who have the courage to come forward and ask for help need options. We need to improve our services in this province to better support those who suffer from eating disorders, and this government has the power to make that happen.

Right now, there are limited resources for Ontarians with eating disorders. The GTA, for instance, has a population of over six million people, yet the area has only two eating disorder programs, accommodating only 14 adult inpatient beds. The waiting lists for OHIP-covered beds are often months long. There are no specialized treatment centres or facility or team of experts

available for individuals who either require or request immediate care, and the needs for intervention for people with eating disorders are complex at all stages.

Eating disorders especially affect young people, both men and women. Treatment offered in hospitals generally includes medical stabilization and refeeding, but this kind of one-size-fits-all approach is said to only be successful in 25% of the cases. Successful treatment has to address both the physiological and the psychological needs of a patient, but the reality people face here in Ontario is that this kind of two-track approach is unavailable or not funded.

One treatment centre, Homewood Health Centre in Guelph, notes that there is a severe lack of OHIP-covered treatment options. The waiting list for the two OHIP-funded beds they have recently added was closed as of spring 2015.

For those seeking different, less-intensive treatment, there remain limited options. OHIP-covered outpatient programs are run only at certain hospitals, creating a geographic challenge for many people with eating disorders. That is sometimes also compounded with restrictive eligibility criteria or even a lack of specific treatment for eating disorders, instead addressing mental illness as whole.

The majority of clinicians who are knowledgeable and who actively treat eating disorders are not physicians. Their fees are not covered by most private health insurance plans. OHIP doesn't cover psychologists, for example, who can provide valuable help for people with eating disorders, and whose services can cost hundreds of dollars an hour.

I remember early in my term getting a desperate call from a parent. It stays with me because this mother was filled with fear—that's the only way I can describe it—because there were so few options for her. We tried to help, but, as the member from Whitby–Oshawa said, we had to send her to the States because that's where she could get the services.

There is no doubt that awareness is important, and I applaud the effort by the member, but we have the opportunity as legislators to help do so much more to support people in this province who suffer. We can do this together.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Madam Speaker, I'm honoured to rise in the House today to speak on Bill 189 that seeks to recognize the first week of February as Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I want to thank the member from Sudbury for drawing attention to this very important topic.

Many have been touched by mental health challenges, whether it's a friend, a co-worker, a family member or ourselves. In fact, one in three Canadians experience a mental health issue in their lifetime.

Our government's investments in community mental health and addictions have more than doubled since 2003, from \$515 million to \$1.1 billion. This increase in

funding represents an important cultural shift in how our society views and regards those living with mental illness issues.

This political commitment recognizes the severe consequences of inaction, especially for our children and youth, our well-being, our social cohesion and, in fact, our economy.

However, despite the strides that have been made to break down the barriers around mental health, many Canadians still believe that eating disorders are a personal choice. They are not. Eating disorders are a mental health condition, and they have the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses. They can affect anyone, and sometimes that means children as young as three years old.

As you know, Madam Speaker, I have two teenage daughters, who are now 17 and 19 years old. They live in a different world than we lived in, and with networking through social media, they have many peers as friends. In fact, they have thousands, but that's another story.

They have brought to my attention over the years a number of cases where their friends have had a slow decline in health due to eating disorders, where pounds are not just shed at a drastic and catastrophic rate, but their organs are actually shutting down. Several have had to be hospitalized in order to be stabilized, and we are currently praying for one who is in the hospital right now getting much-needed treatment.

Stigma and discrimination often come, too, from a lack of information and an inability to understand. Stigma and discrimination are serious barriers to diagnosis and treatment, and to acceptance in the community. They prevent individuals from reaching their full potential and leading a happy, healthy and fulfilling life.

Building on the great work of local organizations and treatment centres such as the Hotel Dieu Hospital and Addiction and Mental Health Services in Kingston and the Islands, Eating Disorders Awareness Week will increase public understanding, reduce stigma and encourage people to come forward and seek support and treatment.

In 2014, the federal Standing Committee on the Status of Women produced a report that examined eating disorders specifically in girls and women in Canada. One mother reported, "I feel impending doom, the same impending doom I felt when I was alone at my lowest weight and bingeing/purging 24/7. It's the sense of profound fear that I'm not going to make it out of this eating disorder. I'm not going to be the one third that recovers. I may even be in the 20% that die...."

"There is nowhere to go in the emergency. There are so few who understand. I still wake up dreading the day. How will I get through it? What will I eat or not eat? How will I control myself from eating trigger foods? I can't focus on anything. I can barely read, or write, or find joy in anything because I'm constantly paralyzed with fear and anxiety, consumed with indecision and yearning to be numb."

Greater awareness is needed among the general public and among professionals who encounter or treat individ-

uals with eating disorders so that there is better recognition for the onset of symptoms and earlier intervention, which will, in return, result in more successful support and treatments.

Madam Speaker, I lend my full support to Bill 189.

Merci. Meegwetch. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to welcome my friends from Community Living Chatham-Kent, a new group that just got in. They're here visiting Queen's Park: Jonathan Myers, Wayne Bachynski, Kevin Sinclair, Brian Kelly, Jackie Choudhry and Craig Walker. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to add my thoughts to this important discussion today. I congratulate the member from Sudbury for bringing a very sensitive topic to the House that people can relate to and empathize with.

I think it's noteworthy to say that creating a full week of awareness will have lasting effects across the province, when people are encouraged to speak about their experiences so we can learn from them and, most importantly, learn how to support them.

That point was driven home for me today when the member from Ottawa-Orléans shared such a personal experience with it, having an eating disorder within her family. It drives home the point that we all have to do better in terms of our front-line health care and the services that are available.

1420

To that end, the member from Ottawa-Orléans used the phrase, "We need to break the silence." That reminded me of an initiative that Bruce Power initiated in our region just a couple of short weeks ago. For every time #BreakTheSilence was tweeted or retweeted, they generated dollars to support organizations throughout the region that do indeed offer support. It ended up that Bruce Power donated \$80,000 to support organizations throughout the region. I congratulate all involved in that regard. We need to do more and we need to do everything we can to back up those support services.

Wes for Youth is an online support service that I've mentioned before in this House, but they cross the spectrum of needs of young people. Eating disorders are very much a part of their scope. And it's stunning. The outreach that they have online and the support from Bruce Power and concerned citizens speak volumes when it enables initiatives like Wes for Youth to continue.

I hope that, as we adopt an awareness week, not only do we focus on eating disorders but we focus on the types of supports that we need throughout our communities to support the victims' walk down the path towards recovery.

We've recognized and we've heard already that eating disorders are a very serious mental illness that impacts Ontarians throughout their lives. It's difficult to know

exactly how many people suffer from eating disorders in Ontario since there is no system currently in place, to my understanding, to track the number of sufferers.

We do know that these disorders are most prevalent among teenaged women and men who are going through life experiences that make them more sensitive about their body image. But we have to make sure that they know that supports are in place.

It's interesting: When I did a little bit of research on eating disorders, this whole spectrum truly is one of the most neglected and misunderstood health problems.

I just want to give another thank you to some people throughout my riding of Huron-Bruce who are taking important steps forward. They include the Alexandra Marine and General Hospital in Goderich. It offers, for example, specialized counselling to people diagnosed with eating disorders or engaging in eating disorder behaviours through clinics in Goderich, Wingham, Clinton, Exeter and Seaforth. This service is voluntary, and there are no charges or fees connected with attending the program.

Residents of Bruce county, on the other hand—I've mentioned the online service Wes for Youth, but there's also special counselling through the Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services clinic, located in Owen Sound, and at the Bruce Primary Mental Health Team in Hanover. Both of these organizations offer a variety of services to help individuals suffering from food and weight issues associated with anorexia, bulimia, weight preoccupation and disordered eating.

I just want to thank them and tell them, "We stand beside you." I congratulate Bruce Power for creating such a unique initiative to raise funds online through #BreakTheSilence. In my riding right now, there's a radiothon happening, facilitated by CKNX radio, that is raising funds for our health care heroes, and I thank them as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to rise in this Legislature and speak in support of this motion to establish an Eating Disorders Awareness Week.

I'd like to welcome and recognize Wendy Preskow, founder and president of NIED, the National Initiative for Eating Disorders, and also to welcome the professionals and supporters of this motion who are here today.

One of the very first constituent meetings that I ever had was with a dynamic young woman from NIED named Stephanie, who knew how important it was for MPPs to understand the realities of eating disorders.

I have met with parents, youth and health care professionals advocating on behalf of those who struggle and suffer with eating disorders. I have heard heart-wrenching stories.

Across our society, we are told to value beauty, money and lifestyle. Obviously there isn't money to be made from sustainable wellness and long-term health or satisfaction with self. I say this because everywhere we see ads and reinforcement of the message to get thin, to

get skinny, to be less or to be more: to be unhappy with ourselves, to look in the mirror and see potential instead of seeing worth.

We should value health—absolutely. But physical as well as mental health matters. Wellness should not be a measure of waistline.

I taught for many years, and I have seen our education and health system focus on obesity, food and exercise. We see obesity. Often we don't see eating disorders, but they are there. We need to teach children about nutrition and wellness. When we constantly focus, though, on counting calories, we focus on how to restrict, how to self-harm and how to limit ourselves. We ought to focus on nutrition, positive body image, variety and diversity, and wellness.

I taught a grade 4 girl who had developed a daily exercise regimen involving weights, push-ups, sit-ups and desperate cardio for two straight hours a day and frightening caloric restriction because she was "disgusting." I have taught grade 7 and 8 girls who self-harm to cope with their challenges, and that self-harm usually involved cutting and food control. Our children are suffering in mainstream society and they need help. Our kids, though, need tools and not weapons.

Eating disorders can affect anyone, but they are predominantly suffered by women, and unfortunately, often our health care system doesn't know how to recognize or deal with them. Those who seek treatment or care are often ignored and made to further suffer when their illness is shrugged off or they're just told to eat. Someone with an eating disorder has a mental illness and, I would say, a very destructive and intensely emotional relationship with food. It is their control, their weapon, their tool, their lifeline and their pain.

Treatments that force someone slowly dying of anorexia back up to a safe weight are not only cruel, they are inhumane. When our treatments damage instead of support, we have to stop and change course. We don't have enough information. We don't keep stats on deaths due to eating disorders. When someone dies due to an eating disorder, usually their heart stops. They die from cardiac arrest, but we don't keep track of additional information like, "struggled through adolescence with anorexia nervosa" or "complications due to suspected eating disorder." We should keep track, because Ontarians deserve health care to meet their needs, and this is an area of need.

I was very glad to be at the opening of the adolescent Eating Disorders Unit at Ontario Shores that we heard about earlier today. It is the first of its kind in the province. In fact, before this specialized care unit, families had to send their children to the States for help and care. Dr. Leora Pinhas is the lead physician for the adolescent eating disorders program at Ontario Shores and is no stranger to dynamic advocacy. This Minister of Health and Long-Term Care needs to sit down with her for a day and learn; learn the realities and take her advice and that of other professionals. This is not an area where we can make it up. People are suffering and dying, and we need to find a way to help and not harm.

We are starting to talk more about mental health, but we clearly need to be talking about eating disorders. We need more awareness, and we need appropriate care. I'm glad to have this conversation in the Legislature, but I will be even more glad when we take it to heart and design appropriate care for those struggling with mental illness, specifically eating disorders.

I'm very pleased to support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 189, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I'd like to congratulate the member from Sudbury for bringing this initiative forward.

Eating disorders are complex conditions that often leave people feeling isolated and misunderstood. They are pernicious and persistent, and tragically, in many cases, they are the most fatal of all mental illnesses. As a parent of a child who has recovered from an eating disorder, I know that creating greater awareness is critical to supporting individuals, families and loved ones coping with an eating disorder.

Our daughter Kirsten's experience with an eating disorder was a very challenging time for her and for our family. She struggled with anorexia and the mental as well as physical effects that it produces. We struggled with trying to help her, often feeling helpless, frustrated, overwhelmed and scared that she would succumb to it. We were fortunate to have found Hopewell, an Ottawa organization that supported our family and connected us with other families that were living or had lived the same experience. That shared experience kept our family focused on what was important for Kirsten, even though it so often seemed she did not want our help. Thankfully, Kirsten overcame the disorder with the support of her family and friends, and also mostly due to her own will to get better. Linda and I are very proud of her, as we are of all of our children, and she is expecting her second child this summer.

Eating disorders are not well understood in our society and they are often treated casually by others, the subject of offhand remarks or thoughtless jokes. We need to eliminate the stigma that those suffering from eating disorders face, to counter the stereotypes and create better awareness for public and for professionals supporting those with eating disorders. We need to understand and address the societal causes that lie at the root of eating disorders, our own perceptions and prejudices about eating disorders, and the body image pressures from external sources, like media, to achieve a perceived beauty ideal.

1430

We live in a world where children and adults are bombarded daily with images and messages that portray a narrow and exclusive standard of beauty and set up a false and dangerous ideal to be achieved. This bill is an important first step in helping society acknowledge and address our collective role in preventing and supporting those with eating disorders.

My mother used to tell Kirsten daily that although she was suffering, suffering produces perseverance, perseverance builds character, and character builds hope, and that one day her suffering would allow her to help others and, more importantly, to provide them with hope.

My point in sharing her story is to say that the hope my mother described to Kirsten exists, and the path to that hope is through greater understanding. We can only achieve that understanding through greater awareness, and that is exactly what this bill sets out to achieve.

I am proud to give it my full support and would urge my colleagues on all sides to do the same.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's a pleasure to be able to rise to speak today on such an important initiative as Bill 189.

I think that we have had the opportunity, in a much greater proportion than we would normally have, for people to tell their personal stories, and I think the reason that they are able to tell their personal stories is because there are so many people.

I know, as a former classroom teacher, that it took a while before you recognized the signs, but you suddenly would realize that a particular girl had to excuse herself at the same time every day subsequent to lunch. Before long it's, "Wait a minute," and by her agitation of not being able to, in any way, run into any interference on that, it became obvious to you that it was a more serious problem.

The bill, if passed, would proclaim the week beginning February 1 in each year as Eating Disorders Awareness Week. Certainly our caucus shares the concerns of individuals and their families who have been affected by eating disorders.

Healthy diets and lifestyle education are important for the overall health of all Ontarians, but eating disorders really are in their own category. They can develop in anyone, regardless of age, race, socio-economic status, gender or ability. I know that in my riding of York-Simcoe, far too many people, particularly young people, struggle with eating disorders. When someone is struggling with an eating disorder, their weight becomes the key focus of their life. It may be either extreme. It impacts their ability to have a meal with friends, enjoy a slice of cake at a birthday party, or snack on popcorn at the movies, and even affects their ability to function as an alert individual.

Healthy meals nourish the body and enable students to learn and employees to work effectively. Unfortunately, calories, grams of fat, and exercise become an all-consuming preoccupation, with school, work, and their social life being negatively impacted. This gives the victim a sense of control and allows them to mask the very real mental illness at its core.

Body image is also a key factor in any eating disorder: the desire to look better, to fit in and to be attractive. It is an all-consuming obsession that seriously endangers their health. Of all the psychiatric illnesses, eating disorders have the highest mortality rate. Eating disorders are a very real mental and physical health concern.

Ontario does not have a system for tracking those who suffer and, as a result, there is no information as to the exact number of those suffering or data on the wait times for those who require treatment. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of stigma, and this bill's purpose is obviously to chip away at that.

The Southlake regional hospital, which serves many members of my community, has a program for children and adolescents struggling with eating disorders. Recognized as a leader in the east central region of Ontario, this program is affiliated with both the University of Toronto and York University. This program has been a feature of Southlake for many years and has served many constituents of mine and their families.

Together, we can help end eating disorders.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate and thank the member for Sudbury for bringing forward this bill to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I also want to thank, in particular, the member for Ottawa—Orléans and the member for Ottawa South for sharing those deeply personal stories, which are so important to this debate.

I wanted to speak to this bill today because, as the member for London West, I have learned that London apparently has a higher incidence of eating disorders among youth in our city than the Canadian average, so this is of concern to me and it's also of interest to understand why that statistic exists.

In addition, as women's issues critic for the NDP caucus, this is very much a gendered issue. We have heard, and it is definitely true, that eating disorders can affect anyone across socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender—male or female—age or income. However, it is primarily a disease that affects women. Eighty percent—sometimes the statistic says as high as 90%—of those affected are female.

The onset typically occurs between the ages of 11 and 14, but as we heard, it can affect children as young as age seven or even earlier, and it can also develop in adults. It has the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses. Lifetime mortality rates for anorexia are as high as 20%, and incidence is increasing. In just the last two years, there has been a 42% increase in hospitalizations for girls aged 10 to 19. That's from the 2014 report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women—the research they did on eating disorders.

I want to read a quote from that report. Dr. Blake Woodside, a physician who specializes in treating eating disorders, came to the committee and said, "If anorexia was an illness of middle-aged men, there'd be a clinic in every hospital in this country but because it's a psychiatric illness of young women it's discriminated against."

Clearly, the treatment of eating disorders is badly underfunded, both on the treatment side and also on the support and recovery side.

In my community, there is a wonderful organization called Hope's Garden. It is an eating disorder resource and support centre. It is funded entirely by corporate sponsors through special events and some small foundation grants; there's no government funding whatsoever. There's only a single staff person there, executive director Natasha Newby. They treat 150 individuals every month and provide group support for another 50 individuals at no cost whatsoever. They have seen their numbers climbing over the last three years, and Natasha tells me that while a treatment process is about three months in length, a recovery process can actually take up to seven years. We know there is, many times, up to a two-year wait to access treatment services, but it is those ongoing recovery services that are so important.

I support this bill and look forward to raising awareness, but we also have to ensure that the treatment and supports are there after the awareness is raised.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Sudbury to wrap up.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I want to thank all the members who participated in this debate and shared their personal stories. I'd like to use my final rebuttal to read—I have permission—Wendy's daughter Amy's poem. I think this sums up our debate. It goes:

My eating disorder is not ...

It's not a diet nor a lifestyle or a senseless teenage phase

It's not stupid it's not silly nor the latest weight loss craze.

It's not a passion, not a hobby and it is not some twisted game.

It is fatal, yes, it's DEADLY, it's an illness of the brain

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It's not fun and it's not funny, not intentional, not a choice.

It kills you slowly every day and overtakes your voice.

It's not my fault, it's not intentional, not some spiteful sleight of hand.

It's an anxiety-driven fear-based disease that too few understand.

It's not a joke and it's not selfish; it is the furthest thing from vain.

It's a drastic telltale of no self-esteem and unparalleled burning shame.

It's not malicious or dismissive, not distinct to middle-class white girls.

It's a disease like any other, ensnaring every age, class and race 'round the world.

It's not uncommon; it's not weird; it dates back centuries—nothing new.

It's the single most fatal mental illness, which all statistics prove to be true.

Telling an anorexic to "just eat" is like expecting a deaf person to "just talk."

Telling a binge eater to "just stop"

Is like demanding a paraplegic to "just walk."

Telling a bulimic to "just eat normally" is cruel, ignorant and frustrating.

Telling an exercise addict to "just sit down" is like telling schizophrenics "just stop hallucinating."

This illness is biological and genetic; it's like cancer of mind and thought.

It doesn't come from nowhere; you are either born susceptible or not.

If you think this is a ridiculous phase or that we'd be fine if we "just tried,"

Then explain to me the shocking rate of sufferers committing suicide

If EDs were just a stupid choice or you think that we're just lying,

Then why are millions desperate for help while millions more are dying?

That was by Amy Preskow.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We'll vote on the bill at the end of private members' public business.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government of Canada to protect pensioners by amending the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to ensure that benefits owed to pensioners be given top priority in the event that a company files for bankruptcy.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. French has moved private member's notice of motion number 73. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is always my privilege to rise in the Legislature and add my voice to the debate, but today is a very special and important opportunity. Today I am here to present and debate my first private member's motion, which calls on the federal government to protect and prioritize pensioners.

Speaker, all Ontarians deserve to retire with dignity, and Ontarians with a workplace pension plan should be able to count on their full benefits being there when they retire.

It's also my privilege to recognize some special guests and supporters who are here with us in the Legislature today. This motion represents the plight of thousands upon thousands of workers in Ontario. Today we are

joined by some that have already been affected and by some that want to ensure that no future worker is forced to wonder whether their pension will be there when they retire or not.

Starting with my riding of Oshawa, we have Peter Johnson, who is a General Motors retiree and is here on behalf of the Unifor Local 222 Retired Workers Chapter. We welcome Peter.

On behalf of the GENMO Salaried Pension Organization, we have Mike Powell, Mike Black, Lynn McCullough and Garry Marnoch. GENMO is also an affiliate of the Canadian Federation of Pensioners, whom I've been fortunate enough to meet with in preparation for this motion.

As I'm sure you all know from the news, there is no group more affected by this issue currently than the past and current US Steel employees from Hamilton and Lake Erie. Today we are joined by USW Local 1005 president Gary Howe and USW Local 8782 president Bill Ferguson, as well as Ron Wells and Dennis Van Meer, who are all here on behalf of and in support of all their members. We welcome you all to the Legislature and thank you for everything you do to protect the retirement security of workers.

I know my time is limited, so I will get right to it, Madam Speaker. As the MPP for Oshawa, I work every day to represent the interests of my constituents, but I am also the NDP critic for pensions, and today we are here to talk about an issue where those two roles intersect. We are here to discuss pension security and the importance of ensuring that all Ontarians with a workplace pension plan are able to count on their full benefits being there when they retire. Sadly, this is not always the case in Ontario. In this very chamber, we have spoken at length about what needs to be done for future retirees, but we cannot forget about existing pensioners.

Under the current system, pensioners can find themselves at the bottom of the ladder when a company files for bankruptcy. This means that when a pension plan is underfunded and a company enters bankruptcy proceedings, pensioners often take a backseat to bondholders and external creditors during restructuring. As a result, pensioners can see the benefits that they have worked their entire careers for slashed at the time they need them most.

That's what this is about, Speaker: the pensioners. There are a lot of them and they come from a lot of different organizations and companies. I've met with or received emails from concerned or affected pensioners from General Motors, US Steel, Nortel, Sears, Labatt and Fiat Chrysler, just to name a few. These are companies that represent tens of thousands of workers in this province and their employees and pensioners are terrified about what is going to happen to their pension plans.

These individuals have done what they are supposed to do. They have worked their entire lives contributing their own money off of each and every paycheck, yet they can't count on their pension being there when they finally need it.

I've got stacks of emails. I brought one with me and this is one from a retired Sears employee: "The Sears situation is one example where I myself, a 38-year retired employee, will be affected because of the lack of concern and action of the government. The government continues to allow large companies to defer the payments ... into pension plans while all along allowing massive dividends to shareholders and fund managers."

Speaker, that's a real concern. There are many real concerns, like this one from a GM employee who had so little confidence in the pension security system in Ontario that he felt the need to take a commuted value of his pension. He said, "I'm sure you are aware of the ongoing concerns by GM workers, past, present and future, that GM is struggling to keep their pension plan properly funded.... With the risk that my pension could be significantly reduced down the road, I chose the commuted value lump sum. In speaking with fellow retirees over the last couple of years, most have taken the lump sum due to a lack of confidence in the GM pension funding."

This is a significant decision that pensioners should be able to make of their own accord, not under duress and not because of the fear that it is the only way that they will ever see their pension. And pensions are not fringe benefits. They are deferred wages that workers have earned and that have been put aside so they could retire in dignity. Quite simply, this is a matter of fairness. It isn't fair, it isn't right and it has to change.

So today, we are here debating my first private member's motion, which calls on the federal government to prioritize pensioners during bankruptcy proceedings. The motion mirrors a private member's bill first introduced by Jack Layton in 2009 and calls for amendments to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to ensure that benefits owed to pensioners are given top priority in the event a company files for bankruptcy. This is a federal change, but it affects thousands of pensioners and their families in Ontario, and as representatives of those pensioners, we in this Legislature need to take a stand.

Canada is one of the few countries in the OECD to offer zero protection for pensioners in the event of corporate bankruptcy. Although the Ontario Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund may help soften the blow for some, it does not guarantee that they will get anywhere near the full amount owed to them.

It is unfair and shameful that pensioners may suddenly find their pension cut by upwards of 40% through no fault of their own, simply because their former employer goes into bankruptcy. We saw it happen to employees at Nortel when the company collapsed in 2009, and we are watching it happen to employees of US Steel before our eyes. We want to ensure that no worker in Ontario will be condemned to the same fate in the future. With the US Steel example, we've seen US Steel Canada pay back a loan to its parent company in the United States before funding its pension plan. It is astounding that we have allowed this to happen.

The Liberal governments, both in Ontario and at the federal level, have spoken at length about the importance of retirement security, but retirement security in the province can only be strengthened when no one is left behind and when Ontarians feel confident that the promises made to them will be kept.

Today, we are calling on the government to take a stand and give existing and future pensioners the support they deserve. I am asking the government and the opposition to support this motion because it affects constituents and their families in each and every one of our ridings. This is, fundamentally, about what is right and what is fair.

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As always, we as MPPs are not the experts but we have the opportunity to meet with the experts and the affected individuals, and I've done my best to listen. I've met with workers and pensioners, those affected by this issue and those who want to make sure that no one else will be affected. Speaker, I want to make sure that everyone here remembers that it is pensioners who this is really about, so I'm going to finish off with a few statements of support from those who are actually in this fight.

First, from USW Locals 1005 and 8782 on behalf of their members: "For the last seven months, thousands of pensioners and surviving spouses in our communities have suffered physically, financially and emotionally as a result of the shameful elimination of their post-retirement health benefits by US Steel Canada.

"We see their suffering and hear their stories every day. We see pensioners who have exhausted all of their savings and who must now scramble to find the money to buy the prescription drugs they desperately need. We see the retirees who are going without their medication, their treatments and the tests they need, because they cannot afford the cost.

"These pensioners are not asking for handouts. Their benefits and pensions are not gifts bestowed upon them by some benevolent employer. They earned their benefits and pensions during a lifetime of work. They deferred wage gains and made other concessions throughout their working lives, in exchange for receiving decent pensions and benefits during retirement.

"It is unconscionable that the laws of our country allow pensioners to be denied the deferred wages and benefits that they earned. It is equally unconscionable that any of our political leaders, at any level, would not support changing these laws to defend the rights and interests of our pensioners.

"It is time for our elected leaders to stand up for the rights and the dignity of the most vulnerable residents of our communities."

Next, from the GENMO Salaried Pension Organization, on behalf of salaried workers at General Motors:

"GENMO directly advocates on behalf of the 8,000 members of GM Canada's salaried pension plan. As all private defined benefit pension plans share the same security risks we indirectly advocate on behalf of the 1.5

million Canadian families including all 50,000 members of GM Canada's pension plans....

"Companies who choose to file for restructuring or bankruptcy can and do abandon their pension obligations, resulting in significant pension reductions and loss of medical benefits for plan members. Pensioners have little or no ability to recover these losses unlike all of the other stakeholders. Nortel, while not the only example is the best known....

"In our opinion, the best way to accomplish this is to make changes to the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to protect the entire pension obligation."

Finally, Madam Speaker, from the Retired Workers Chapter of Unifor Local 222, and on behalf of all retired GM workers in Oshawa, I'd like to read this statement:

"On behalf of the more than 13,000 retirees in the Retired Workers Chapter of Unifor Local 222, I commend you for bringing this motion forward.

"It is long overdue, as we firmly believe that Ontario's pensioners should be given top priority for all benefits (pension and health care) that were promised and negotiated in good faith with the employers over the years.

"On behalf of our membership, we support this motion fully."

Pensioners are not a bottom-rung priority, and it is our responsibility to ensure that they are not treated like one. Everyone deserves to retire with dignity, especially when it comes to pensioners who have worked and saved their entire working lives. It is our responsibility to improve the system and give them the protection that they deserve and need. There is a long way to go, but we have an opportunity today, and I ask that everyone joins me by supporting this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure, as always, to rise in this House and to speak on behalf of pension security. I think it's very important that we recognize the value of people's contributions to pensions and that this is something that's going towards their retirement future. I want to thank the member from Oshawa, who also happens to be my critic, for putting forward this motion today which aims to enhance pension security. I also want to welcome the guests who are here and the retirees who are here. Thank you so much for your service and for your contribution.

This is definitely a worthwhile goal, Madam Speaker, in terms of strengthening overall retirement security, and that is a goal that I support.

As this House knows, our government takes retirement security very seriously. That's why we've been working on enhancements to retirement security. We have made enhancing retirement security one of the key pillars of our economic plan. We believe that after a lifetime of working and contributing to the economy, Ontarians deserve to retire with that dignity and with the security that a pension provides.

We know that over the last number of years, defined benefit plan sponsors have and continue to face financial challenges due to the low long-term interest rates. We know that something has to be done to address this situation and that's why our government is currently conducting a review of the current solvency funding framework.

The government has appointed David Marshall former president and CEO of the WSIB, to lead the solvency funding review with a view to assisting the Ministry of Finance in developing a balanced set of solvency funding reforms.

Reforms will focus on, importantly, planned sustainability, affordability, benefit security, and take into account the interests of pension stakeholders, including sponsors, unions, members and, of course, retirees.

I want to thank once again the retirees who are here today.

We have also established a stakeholder reference group to ensure that reforms to the existing solvency funding framework are informed by different stakeholder perspectives. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this review.

As we move forward with the review, we recognize that we need to take action now to support plan sponsors in the near term. That's why our government plans to introduce temporary changes to pension funding requirements. Temporary solvency funding relief measures introduced in 2009 and 2012 will be extended. For the first valuation report filed in the three-year period, a plan administrator will be able to extend the period for funding a new solvency deficiency from five to 10 years with the consent of active members or their collective bargaining agent, former members and retired members, and extend the consolidation of schedules for funding existing deficiencies.

At the same time, I would be remiss if I didn't also talk about the steps that our government is taking to enhance pension coverage to millions of working Ontarians.

Our government sees the value of having security in retirement. I'm proud of our goal to ensure that by 2020, all Ontarians are part of the ORPP or a comparable workplace pension plan. Study after study has told us that many Canadians are not saving enough for retirement, and without action, this means Ontarians may face a decline in their standard of living in retirement.

The ORPP will help close the retirement savings by creating a secure retirement income floor for Ontarians to rely on. The ORPP will provide Ontarians with a predictable stream of income, indexed to inflation and paid for life, with a survivor benefit that extends to singles. This means that future retirees and their families will have more disposable income to spend in their neighbourhoods, supporting local businesses and their communities.

We believe that after a lifetime of working and contributing to the economy, Ontarians deserve to retire with dignity. That's exactly what we're doing with the ORPP and that's why we're strengthening retirement security overall, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for the chance to lend my voice to this call on the federal government to ensure the benefits of pensioners in cases of bankruptcy.

Let me start off the top by saying I know that there is nobody here, no matter what political stripe, who does not support the concept that protections should be in place for pensions and other savings, and there is no one among us who doesn't support the right of every Ontarian to be able to retire with dignity.

We all know the concerning stories that emerge when companies, large or small, are forced into filing for bankruptcy, leading to impacts for pensioners and other creditors right across the board. We've heard the heart-wrenching tales of hard-working employees at places like Nortel, where 20,000 employees found themselves out of a job and facing an uphill, agonizing battle to try to pry at least some of the secure retirement benefits they had worked so hard for.

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To be clear, it shouldn't take a six-year legal battle to access pension benefits that many have worked their entire life towards. Again, every employee in Ontario should have the right to retire with dignity, and to be clear, ensuring that right was one of the reasons our caucus supported the government's Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, helping to ensure that Ontarians are able to save adequately for their retirement years.

Closer to home, I recall the anxiety and concern of former Budd Canada employees of Kitchener: 1,500 employees who, after the Budd bankruptcy, faced specific concerns over drastic impacts to their health benefits in 2011; retirees ranging in age from the mid-fifties to the early nineties facing the prospect of lost health benefits and being forced to navigate the maze of private insurance companies, despite their years of work to pay into a benefit program that was being phased out.

I don't think anyone wants to see their parents, friends, or family members who have worked so hard their entire lives having nothing there to support them when they enter their retirement years. Those who have worked to earn those supports should have the comfort of knowing that they will be there when retirees need them the most.

As concerning as those stories are, we do have to also acknowledge the concerns that the bill we are debating today may foster, in some corners, concerns that when we start stepping into a system to give more weight to one group of creditors over another, we do risk creating instability that will impact the strong, secure employment we need to provide that strong, secure retirement that we all want. They do go hand in hand: Strong, secure employment ensures the stability of our corporations to provide that strong, secure retirement for the future. In the end, it's about balance to ensure our actions here continue to lead us closer to the time when the secure

retirement we've worked toward is a reality for employees across Ontario.

All that said, I want to commend the member for Oshawa for bringing this to the floor today and I look forward to the further steps we can take to support the right of every Ontarian to be able to retire with dignity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's always an honour to stand in this Legislature on behalf of my constituents in Kenora-Rainy River.

Today, I rise to speak on my colleague from Oshawa's private member's motion on pension security. I'd like to begin by thanking my colleague for all of her hard work on this file.

This motion calls on the federal government to make pensioners a priority claimant during bankruptcy proceedings. As we know, under the current system, underfunded pension plans are near the bottom of the pile when a company files for bankruptcy, leaving pension benefits at risk.

Really, what this comes down to—three main things stick out for me. Pensions are not fringe benefits; they're deferred wages earned over a lifetime of hard work. The second is that pensioners have worked hard their entire lives and deserve to retire comfortably, with dignity and with peace of mind. The third is that a company should have an obligation to the people who built it, before outside creditors, should a company experience bankruptcy.

I have to say that I've heard from residents in my constituency on the importance of pensions, and being a younger person when I was first elected—29—I have to admit that I wasn't really thinking about my pension all that much. So it really came as a surprise to me and it was really heart-breaking and eye-opening to sit down with hundreds of people in Kenora-Rainy River whose companies had benefited from years upon years of contribution holidays to their pensions, and then, with the company going out of business, having to decide, with the particular solvency ratio, what they should do. Should they cash out their pensions and receive less than they would if they actually continued on? Do they roll the dice? What do they do?

Many people agonized over this, because we're not talking about it being a small difference in the amount of money that they would get if they would have cashed out versus if they would have received their monthly amounts. We're talking tens of thousands of dollars, and in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars for people who had been there for a particularly long period of time.

I also found it shocking when I met with people and heard that nobody was immune from this. You could already be retired, you could be looking forward to and have your whole future planned out of how you're going to spend your money and the things you're going to do in your golden age, and have that threatened and potentially ripped away. It's wrong.

I commend my colleague for bringing forward this very important motion. I think it's incumbent upon us, as

MPPs, to do what we can to work with the federal government to make sure the changes are in place that provide dignity and respect for pensioners.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's an honour today to stand and speak in reference to the bankruptcy act amendment brought forward by my neighbour to the east, the MPP from Oshawa. I have to tell you that this opinion is part of the House: "The Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government of Canada to protect pensioners by amending the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to ensure that benefits owed to pensioners be given top priority." That's a very worthwhile project.

"In the province of Ontario, this can be strengthened when no one is left behind and when promises made are kept." I believe that's a quote from my neighbour to the east of us, the MPP from Oshawa.

The motion calls for the government of Canada to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. Both are federal pieces of legislation. One of the catches is that currently pensioners are not secured claimants, meaning they rank behind the lenders and shareholders when a company declares bankruptcy or, of course, if a company is being restructured. The motion would suggest a significant change in the current system, and that's true.

The proposed change also would give priority to pension claims over the claims of secured lenders. We may want to look at that because they put up their own money and, in many cases, it's their personal savings, lifetime savings. We want to ensure that there is a process where that can be secured, but the main thing that we want to do is look after our elders, our seniors, our pensioners.

The provincial government recognizes that defined benefit plan sponsors continue to face financial challenges due to low long-term interest rates, particularly throughout North America. To assist pension plan and material sponsors in these challenging circumstances, our Ontario government has initiated a review of the current solvency funding framework and that's very, very important.

Two of the previous speakers mentioned US Steel and, of course, previous to that it was Stelco. That's been a scenario that's lingered. Corporately, we want to have it looked after, and it's only appropriate that pensioners be taken care of. I know the Minister of Finance and his officials are engaged in this process to assist pensioners, but there's more than pensioners to this, because when I look at it, I think of a pensioner as a senior, and who couldn't we help more than the seniors of this province?

For me, my mother and father raised 10 children. They never had a pension.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ten? Wow.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Ten children. It was great, Doctor. It was the best time of my life, prior to getting married, which has then become the super-best time of my life.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Good call, good call.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Doctor. I appreciate your direction and guidance.

I want to tell you, my father was an entrepreneur. He was the first postman in Ajax. As soon as he got going and was successful, Canada Post came along and instituted the process out of business. So he was out of business, but he knew everybody in town, so he thought, "I'll start a newspaper." He did, a very successful one. It ran for several decades. It got me through and it got the family through. It definitely put food on the table.

Fortunately, with all the brothers and sisters, the 10 of us, we were able to do something for our parents by contributing monthly so that we had an extra \$500 a month for mum and dad to be taken care of. They weren't pensioners, but they were seniors, and it's one and the same. We want to do that same thing for everyone in that age classification.

I definitely will support it. I think it's a great motion and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to the member for Oshawa's motion regarding protecting pensioners, which I'll be supporting. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the retirees who have made the trip here this afternoon.

I'd like to stress that we support the right of every Ontarian to be able to retire with dignity, and part of this is ensuring that adequate protections for pensions and other savings are in place at every level of government.

Our caucus, for example, supported Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, as one way to help Ontarians save adequately for their retirement years. But we also understand concerns about the rights of creditors in bankruptcy and insolvency situations, and the concerns this may create among investors who, in all cases, must weigh risk.

However, the bottom line is that it can create risk for countless employees and pensioners, should companies not be required to guarantee pension rights. Consequently, borrowing from the member from Oshawa's motion, we need "to ensure that benefits owed to pensioners be given top priority in the event that a company files for bankruptcy," as retirement security in the province can only be strengthened when no one is left behind and when promises made are kept.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm very pleased to be able to speak to this motion today, brought forward by my colleague the member from Oshawa. It's a very important motion, and I'm very proud to be in a caucus that thinks that bringing these bills forward in their private members' space is important. So, congratulations.

It's important because it's essential that we send a strong message to Ottawa that pensioners and retirees should not be left behind. That's exactly what is hap-

pening today. Thousands of people I represent on Hamilton Mountain are retirees from US Steel. They are some of the 20,000 retirees across our area who have been devastated by the cutthroat decision by US Steel.

For decades, families in Hamilton have worked in the steel mills. They worked hard under difficult conditions. They worked in unbearable heat at work that sometimes could be very dangerous. In the process, they made millions upon millions of dollars for their employers. The company thrived, and Hamilton thrived.

Through their union, the United Steelworkers, the workers at what was then Stelco, negotiated contracts that made the workplace safer and allowed them to live a modest but relatively comfortable life away from the mill. That's not a lot to ask for the time they put in, the dangers they faced and the huge riches they accumulated for their bosses. Those negotiations also set a standard for non-unionized employees in the Hamilton steel industry, whether at Stelco or elsewhere.

When they went into those negotiations, they recognized many years ago that a retirement package was something they needed for their future. So they negotiated language that would defer some of their compensation by putting it into a pension plan that could be accessed at a later date. The employer agreed, they reached an agreement and that was the value of the work being done. The longer you served in the company, the greater the retirement compensation would be.

In 2007, US Steel bought Stelco and, ever since, they have shown complete disregard for their workers and retirees. They have now stripped those same retirees of their health benefits that were part of the negotiated retirement package, and they have made it abundantly clear that they have no intention of honouring the workers' pension entitlements.

Here we have a huge US conglomerate that has come into Canada and decimated our Hamilton steel industry. They are now back in the United States and have manufactured a situation where US Steel, the parent company, is considered to be the main creditor of US Steel Canada.

This whole fiasco has been made much worse because it has been impossible to see the details that have been struck in that deal between US Steel and the federal government, and that would have been the Conservative government before this now-Liberal government. But unfortunately, this Liberal federal government has also refused to open that agreement and to show people the deal that was made in that agreement.

The bottom line is that an agreement was made between the workers and their employers: "You put in your shift, you do your work, and here is what you get in return." The workers fulfilled their part of the deal, some of them over the course of 30, 40 or more years. They gave their entire lives to their company. Now the company is reneging on their part of the deal. They said that the workers would get a particular hourly rate. They said that upon retirement, they would get a monthly pension and their health benefits would be covered. Now the

workers are being told that they are out of luck. They are owed those benefits, Speaker, but under the current rules, underfunded pension plans are near the bottom of the list when it comes to companies filing for bankruptcy. This is just plain wrong.

As this motion calls on the federal government to fix that, it will give benefits to the pensioners who are owed their dollars in the top priority. That is the most important piece: that the pensioners become the top priority when it comes to bankruptcy protection.

I've heard from other members in the House already. I know that the member from Oshawa will speak to that. But it concerns me, Speaker, that we have an Associate Minister of Finance who is also responsible for our pension plan who wants to talk about a pension plan going forward in the future but doesn't want to really put much basis into protecting a pension plan that is already in place. So that's greatly concerning for me.

I'm happy to note that I believe the members are supporting it, but we need to make sure that we really have some strong teeth into this and that when we send the message to the federal government, we're sending a clear message and a message of solidarity: that workers in this province deserve what they have worked for, and that is the basis of it. If you have made an agreement, if you have deferred some of your wages to your retirement, then when you reach that retirement age, there is no way that those same wages should be at risk. You've worked for them, you've earned them, and now you deserve to receive them.

I'm really proud of the member from Oshawa for bringing forward this bill. My federal partner, the federal member for Hamilton Mountain, Scott Duvall, is our federal pension critic. He is working alongside the member from Oshawa and working together and bringing everybody together to the table to make sure that we can get this right when it comes to the workers in our province and ensuring that our seniors and our pensioners are getting back what they've earned—their wages—in their pension time. I'm really proud of that work that New Democrats are doing. I would hope that we can count on this provincial Liberal government to take that message back to the federal Liberals and ask them to please make sure that when we're talking about pensions, we do put people as our first priority.

When we're talking about companies, a lot of them these days are coming from other countries, coming into our country and taking over our industries and then walking away and leaving our pensioners, who have worked their entire lives on the basis of an agreement and a deal. We need to ensure that those deals are kept.

I'm hoping that this motion will do the right thing by the pensioners of this province. I'm hopeful that the members will take that message back loud and clear and, quite frankly, that the associate minister responsible for pensions will see that this is an important motion, that this protects the people of the province of Ontario when it comes to pensions, and not just pensions in the future—from the ORPP that people really are going to

have no benefit from for years. For many, many years, people are going to have no benefit from that pension.

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We need to ensure that for pensions that are already in place, that the obligations are being met, that we're not allowing other companies from other countries to come in and steal away our manufacturing jobs and shut us down, and then, quite frankly, not give the benefits and the pensions that have been so rightly earned in awful conditions. Working in a steel mill—I've done a tour through US Steel: not nice conditions. It's hot, it's dirty and they are working awfully hard, again, with the expectation that one day they're going to have their pension; and if they unfortunately get ill from being in an environment like that—which many steelworkers have; they have gotten ill from working in those environments—that they have the benefits when they're no longer employed in that position and that they can live their life with some kind of help.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to the pensioners who are here with us today.

The member from Oshawa and I share a lot of issues and concerns across our region, and I know that security for pensioners, especially senior pensioners who rely on their pensions for income and benefits, is one that we share regionally and fundamentally.

I think there are numerous and far-reaching influences of this bill. I believe that it makes it difficult to say, as a matter of fact, that it would have a net-benefit impact on the lives of those receiving benefits from their pensions. Chief among them is the concern that pensioners should be a priority over secured lenders. That being said, I am not convinced that the security of those lenders trumps the security of those relying on the pension benefits. In fact, the individuals' and workers' security, for me, is paramount.

We have seen a new federal government in Ottawa. This government is interested in CPP reform, though the road ahead is not clear when it comes to interprovincial consensus. Luckily, when we look at Ontario, we know that our government is bringing forth the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, which will roll out soon and have significant impact on future retirement security.

But for those who are now or soon to be retiring, we have to ensure that what pensions they have are secure. Our population is aging and our constituents have worked hard throughout their lives to make a good income, and many have paid into pension plans their entire lives with the promise that it would be there for them when they needed it most, so that when they retire they can maintain their quality of life and their peace of mind. We need to do what we can, as much as we can, to make sure that those promises are kept and pensioners are safe.

Thank you to the member from Oshawa for this motion. I will be supporting this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's my pleasure to enter into today's debate and add a few comments on ballot item number 40. This ballot item proposes to call on the federal government to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to ensure that benefits owed to pensioners be given top priority.

Our position for this comes from our own statement of principles, which reads as follows: "allows every individual freedom of opportunity and initiative and the peaceful enjoyment of the fruits of his or her own labour." That may sound sort of flowery, but it's the reality. It means that we look at the kinds of things that are happening and we suggest that they are not living up to those standards.

Part of the problem is the fact that when you look at the pensions that have been in place for a long time, the governments of the day have not kept up to the requirements of those pension initiatives. An example is the question of Nortel. I think there are probably few of us in southern Ontario who haven't had retirees from Nortel or retirees from the car companies and looked at the circumstances that these people found themselves in.

I applaud the member for providing this initiative here as something directed to the federal government, because much of what is contained in this and what is worrisome is exactly in the bailiwick of the federal government.

What has happened over the last few decades has been a change in the kind of structure that a pension plan would have to have. I recall a situation some years ago when a company was being sold and the owners of the company made sure that the pension fund was protected. It was not something that the new owner could look at as part of the sale.

In the time that has passed since then, we have so many issues like unfunded liabilities and people who live longer and retire earlier and have a low return on investments. These are all things that require a lot of effort in terms of legislation to bring them up to date and to give some assurance to people when they're looking at a pension today that it is a deferred payment and that they do have the right to assume that they will retire with the security of that commitment that they've made in their retirement arrangement with an employer.

I think that we need to look at this piece of legislation in some of the details that have been provided to be able to see the kinds of stages that have been left out, that have not been addressed, that have allowed us to be in this position that we find ourselves in today.

In Canada, companies in bankruptcy protection undergo a restructuring process according to the federal Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, a similar process to the US Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection law. This process enables the company to continue to operate while reorganizing its operations. The court may order the company and its labour unions to negotiate over wages, pensions and benefits but will not dictate any particular outcome.

When a company becomes truly bankrupt, its operations will cease, its remaining assets will be sold off and

pension funds will be wound up. This legal process is governed by a different piece of legislation, the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, and is often where significant problems begin.

When a company enters either of these, pensioners are often left wondering if existing assets in the pension plan protect them from the creditors of the sponsoring company.

These are just some of the situations that people find themselves in. The result is that it gives a super-priority status ahead of secured creditors. Further, if the pension fund is underfunded at the time the sponsoring company becomes bankrupt, the pension fund will be seen as an unsecured creditor in respect of the funding deficiency.

What should we be doing? Well, we support the right of every Ontarian to be able to retire with dignity. Ensuring that reasonable protections for pensions and other savings are in place at every level of government is part of that, and I think that's why we have to be here today providing some support for this private member's bill so that people in Ottawa accept their responsibility.

Our caucus supported the government's Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, as one way to help Ontarians save adequately for their retirement years.

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We understand concerns about the rights of creditors in bankruptcy and insolvency situations, and concerns this may create among investors, who in all cases must weigh risk.

The best way for Ontarians to have a strong and secure retirement is to have strong and secure employment, which, given current energy rates and the red tape burden implemented under this government, is at risk.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Oshawa to wrap up this round of debate.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate all of the thoughtful comments from my colleagues around this Legislature. I'm very pleased to be able to present this motion to call on the government of Canada to protect pensioners by amending the BIA and the CCAA. This is a very personal issue. I don't see this as partisan; I see it as personal. It's personal to those who have worked their entire working lives. It is personal to their families. It is personal to their communities.

Everyone—as we know, and we've heard today, as we've been hearing for months—deserves to retire with dignity. That dignity incorporates peace of mind, not just about being able to pay the bills. It's about being able to count on receiving the benefits that they are due. It involves paying bills, yes, but feeding their families and living in comfort—the comfort that they have earned. These are deferred wages that we're talking about when we're talking about pension benefits. People deserve to be able to participate in their communities and to be able to afford their prescriptions. People should be able to receive what they have earned.

We've heard from the Associate Minister of Finance today, and again, she talks about the importance of a

predictable stream of income. Well, what about a predictable pension? Those pensions that exist need to exist. They need to continue existing. They need to be what people can count on. Ontarians deserve to retire with dignity. This is about fairness. This is about what's right. We, as a Legislature, have the opportunity today to call on the feds to do the right thing.

We talk at length here about secure futures—and I'm glad to—about secure retirement and about future pensioners, but we need to always keep in mind our current pensioners. Those are the real people we're talking about. The real people in Hamilton, we know they're made of strong stuff, but no one should be put through such unfairness, and we support them in their continued fight. Pensioners at GM and across the province deserve to be able to count on their full benefits being there when they retire. I hope that everyone will support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal with the vote on this motion at the end of private members' public business.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (KEEP OUR ROADS SAFER THROUGH THE USE OF INTELLIGENT DRIVE TECHNOLOGIES), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE ACCRUE GRÂCE À L'EMPLOI DE TECHNOLOGIES DE CONDUITE INTELLIGENTE)

Mr. Takhar moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 192, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to lifesaving technologies / Projet de loi 192, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les technologies permettant de sauver des vies.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, this member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: This bill is about life-saving technologies, about saving lives, as the heading of the bill states. Any life we can save, it's worth it, because when there's an accident, it impacts the life of the children and it affects the life of the families. I think all the actions we should take is to make sure that we can save lives.

Let me give you some background. Canada is one of the top-performing nations worldwide in terms of road safety, and Ontario's roads continue to be among the safest in North America. In Canada, Ontario is ranked first among all other provinces in terms of lowest traffic fatalities. We are proud of our safety record and need to build further on our super record.

Madam Speaker, as you are aware, the unsafe road is a major cause of injuries and fatalities, which are predicted to increase if road safety is not addressed adequately from time to time by the public governance. According to

the World Health Organization, without increased evolutionary efforts and new initiatives based on advanced technology, the total number of road traffic deaths and injuries worldwide are forecast to rise by some 65% between 2000 and 2020. Road traffic crashes are predicted to result in the deaths of around 1.9 million people annually by 2020. In economic terms, the cost of road crash injuries is estimated at roughly 2% of the GDP in high-income countries. In view of this, it has been suggested that the safe design of vehicles and roads is considered to be the key to make roads safer and reduce injuries and fatalities.

It is also a widely held belief that human error is a factor in some 90% of road crashes. Safe human behaviour is governed not only by individual knowledge and experience but also by the environment in which the behaviour takes place. Environmental factors include the design and layout of the road, nature and safety technology of the vehicles, and traffic laws and their enforcement. Technological advancement in recent times has opened new horizons for dynamic safety systems.

The paradigm of road-safety-related efforts, therefore, has gradually shifted to influence human behaviour through technologically innovative systems. Safe vehicle mobility is getting connected with the information and communication technology at a very fast rate. The use of information and communication technology is intended to reduce human error and respond quickly either to avoid the accident or crash and/or reduce its severity.

While market forces can help advance in-car safety in individual car models, the aim of synchronizing legislative standards of vehicle design is to ensure an even and acceptable level of safety across all vehicles. Further, current legislative safety system requirements also need improvement from time to time in the light of technological advancement.

With this background information, let me explain the key amendments that are being proposed in this legislation to the Highway Traffic Act.

The proposed legislation has two amendments. The first amendment relates to improving safety—this is, again, I want to say, all about improving safety and saving lives—by incorporating collision avoidance systems and intelligent drive technology in future vehicles. Collision avoidance systems and intelligent drive technologies refer to technologies designed to improve safety, such as proximity sensors, physical signals and cameras that assist the driver of the motor vehicle in helping to avoid or mitigate a crash.

These technologies may include, but are not limited to, any of the following examples:

- front crash prevention or avoidance technology systems that alert the driver when the motor vehicle is in danger of colliding with an object in front of it;

- lane departure warning technology systems that alert the driver if the motor vehicle is drifting from its lane;

- adaptive headlight technology systems that assist the driver in seeing road curves and over hills and bends

during nighttime driving or in low-light conditions. Adaptive headlights turn their beams according to your steering input so that the vehicle's path is lit up;

- blind spot detection technologies available these days that notify the driver of obstructions in his or her blind spot, or that provide visual monitoring of a motor vehicle's blind spot;

- automatic parking and park-assist technologies that assist drivers in backing up a motor vehicle: a parking space recognition system, including parking area recognition, used with the help of image recognition. It determines the parking space and executes automatic parking; and

- pothole sensors. Currently, there are technologies available that can detect potholes. These technologies not only improve road safety but also avoid damage to vehicles.

There are technologies that provide visibility around the motor vehicles, such as:

- advanced cameras, including new stereoscopic cameras. It is mounted on the windshield below the rear-view mirror. It allows Intelligent Drive to recognize the 360 degrees around the vehicle. It can analyze the difference between two images and more accurately detect objects ahead and determine their size and distance.

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We also have lidar sensors. It is simply referred to as laser scanning or 3-D scanning with airborne and mobile applications. It is a combination of light and radar. With its foresights long, short and medium range, lidar scans the environment in front of the car, behind it and out from the rear corners. It can perform robustly in all environments.

Overhead-view camera monitors help to augment the field of vision around the vehicle. It detects approaching obstacles from any direction in combination with an image recognition system and warns the driver accordingly.

All of these technologies fall in the category of active or dynamic safety.

The key objective here is to focus on sensing dangerous situations and attempting to prevent damage or injury together. It utilizes information that can be obtained from the vehicle's surroundings, including traffic, road configuration and conditions, and nearby objects, and works together with passive safety features to mitigate damage in the event of an unavoidable collision.

The second part of the proposed legislation deals with post-collision/accident rescue safety technology. It has been frequently observed that when there is an accident, the first-responder teams find it difficult to extract victims out of the car because they don't have the technical information available to them about the vehicle involved in the crash. Also, there's a lack of resources which provide information about where the gas lines are, or whatever technical information is required for them to extract the people who are in the accident out of the car.

The aim of the proposed post-crash technology is not only to limit further severity of injury and suffering

caused by accidents, but also to extract victims safely and quickly from vehicles for the best possible emergency medical facility.

Technologies such as QR codes, which are quick response codes—these are technologies developed by Mercedes—can assist first responders in assessing technical information about the motor vehicle. QR code technology provides technical information about the structure of the vehicle and can be accessed through smart phones, which everybody has these days. QR codes installation should be made mandatory to assist first responders in accessing technical information about motor vehicles quickly and to eliminate the guesswork.

Currently, safety-driven intelligence technologies are available in most high-end vehicles. However, due to the ongoing growing advancement and constant reduction in cost of these technologies, we should make them available in all vehicles. These technologies can reduce accidents, save lives and continue to keep our roads safer.

When purchasing a vehicle, we pay considerable attention to outside colour and interior décor, but sometimes very little to the safety features. In brief, the proposed intelligent systems enable quick execution of the technically desired action and provide extended value beyond safety, such as comfort and convenience.

It is possible that to incorporate all these safety provisions in vehicles may require us to work closely with Transport Canada. I would strongly urge our Ministry of Transportation to take up this matter with Transport Canada and work together to speed up the incorporation of these advanced Intelligent Drive technologies in all new vehicles sold in Ontario by 2020.

As always, I'm open to all constructive suggestions to make the proposed legislation better to continue to keep Ontario roads safer.

I would like to read a Mowat report, which recently said, "Despite significant improvements in safety, every year approximately 2,000 Canadians are killed in car accidents, with many more injured and significant economic costs incurred. The vast majority of these accidents can be attributed to human, rather than mechanical, error and automated technology presents an opportunity to avoid them."

Not only does the Mowat research report talk about it but even the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in the US advocates almost the same thing.

I'm looking forward to a constructive discussion so that we can talk about how we can save more lives and how we can make our roads much safer. As the Minister of Transportation, as I was for almost three years, I had the opportunity to incorporate a few of these changes, but I think the technology changes all the time and my colleagues after me have done the same. We need to constantly work on these things so that we can continue to save lives and help our families by making our roads safer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I thank the honourable member from Mississauga–Erindale. Now turning to the opposition, the MPP for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga–Erindale, who has brought forward Bill 192 in an attempt to enforce the inclusion of life-saving technologies in all automobiles registered in this province by 2020. I did mention in an earlier debate that we were considering, and we are considering now, a second bill that does cross over into federal jurisdiction. That is what we are talking about here, legislation that would in fact step into the setting of vehicle standards, standards which are currently and have always been regulated under the federal mandate of Transport Canada.

But before I get into that, I want to start by indicating that all of us in the PC caucus support initiatives to improve the safety of motorists on Ontario roadways. In fact, we have a long history of supporting and introducing enhanced safety measures. In 1976, it was a Conservative government under Bill Davis that brought in the first seat belt legislation to protect motorists and passengers alike. It was just last year that we threw our support behind Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act, to take on distracted driving and address the growing impacts to safety on roads and highways right across this province.

Much as Bill 31 dealt with the impacts of emerging technologies, we understand the need to ensure that as our society moves forward and new technology comes on stream impacting or enhancing safety, we must work to move our legislation forward to reflect the new reality.

All that said, I think there is a need to understand how our decision-making in this House will impact on our roadways, if our discussions here will lead to the enhanced safety we're seeking or if, in effect, we're just spinning our wheels. Frankly, after discussing this with many of our road and vehicle stakeholders, manufacturers and safety partners included, I think there is a very real risk we may be engaging in more wheel-spinning and less safety enhancement.

Speaker, while the province does have jurisdiction to set transportation safety standards, manufacturers and stakeholders I've spoken to question the ability of the province to step into vehicle standards setting, which, as I noted off the top, is traditionally a federal jurisdiction of Transport Canada. Vehicle standards are in the federal realm for a very good reason. As manufacturers in my area have told me regarding the prospects of provincial steps into that traditional federal territory, it's already difficult enough to ensure we have matching legislation between the US and Canada to allow for seamless manufacturing of vehicles in both countries. It would only further complicate things if individual governments started developing individual policies at a provincial, state or jurisdictional level.

Just imagine the additional burden created on manufacturers to have multiple specifications for a particular vehicle platform, depending on the province in which they wish their vehicles to be sold. Imagine the related increased costs to manufacturing due to the increased complexity, costs that would ultimately have to be absorbed or passed along to the consumer.

Further, Speaker, the fact is that a lot of this implementation of advanced safety technology can be done, in fact is already being done, by working with manufacturers, as opposed to working to penalize them—the carrot as opposed to the stick.

In speaking with our local Toyota manufacturer, based just outside of my riding in Cambridge, I'm told that many of the technologies the proposed legislation references relating to collision avoidance system/intelligent drive technology are actually either already available in Toyota vehicles today or will have been adapted within this calendar year.

So there is a question as to whether we are discussing a solution rather than looking for a problem.

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Take the Toyota example of a pre-collision system. Again, this is a system already being implemented on current models. It detects vehicles on the road ahead, with a single-lens camera and laser radar, and also helps the vehicle avoid or take reduced damage from collisions. When the system is alerted to the possibility of collision, the driver is alerted with both audio and visual warnings. Once action is taken, if the driver's pressure on the brake is insufficient, the system is triggered to assist. If there is no application of the brake by the driver whatsoever, the system automatically applies the brake itself.

Similarly, when it comes to unwanted lane departures, current Toyota models coming off the line today are already being fitted with enhanced technology to improve safety.

Then there's the lane departure alert system that uses an on-board single-lens camera to detect the vehicle's position relative to the white or yellow lane markings. When the car begins to leave the lane without turn signal activation, the driver is warned—again, with an audible and visual alert. It's the same story with pedestrian detection, dynamic radar cruise control and automatic high beams—all important new safety technology advances already being implemented, or on their way to being implemented, by Toyota and other car manufacturers on their new models rolling onto our roads across Ontario.

I'm not sure why we're asking the LG to investigate and prescribe the latest safety technologies that our manufacturing partners are already well down the road of implementing themselves. And I'm not sure why we're proposing a penalty-based approach, threatening fines to auto manufacturers who are already doing their part in ensuring that vehicles on our roadways are suited up with the latest in advanced technology.

Again, Speaker, the idea that vehicles in Ontario should include the latest safety technology to protect motorists and pedestrians alike is a concept we can all get behind. I just question whether coming at it with penalty-laden provincial legislation actually makes sense.

Furthermore, there are very real concerns over the ability of government to actually enforce this legislation, specifically when it comes to fining of motorists themselves. Not only does Bill 192 call for the setting of fines to be paid by a manufacturer of motor vehicles not

in compliance with the latest safety technology by 2020, it also calls for fines to be levied on the motor vehicle operator if their vehicle is not in compliance.

As one manufacturer noted in my office, this sets the stage for an enforcement nightmare, where drivers with vehicles only a couple of years old face fines for lacking a safety technology aspect that wasn't available before this new legislation and its prescribed technologies were set in stone. How would they be detected anyway? Would police be actively looking for evidence of vehicles without collision avoidance systems? Just what would that look like?

Speaker, I think there are many ways our police officers could help enhance safety and enforce road safety other than having them setting up a safety technology spot-check on hapless motorists whose only crime is driving an older vehicle. All that said, we in the PC caucus have a long history of supporting and introducing provincial legislation aimed at enhancing safety on Ontario highways.

With that, I know my colleague from Perth–Wellington is eager to get into this debate. I look forward to the discussion from the third party and the government.

Thank you, Speaker, for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): For further debate, I'm now turning to the NDP and the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill.

First, though, I have to say that I was very impressed by the comments by the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. I won't come even close to the technical appreciation or assessment that he has put forward. I think he went into the matter in depth and brought a lot of good background information.

The member from Mississauga–Erindale: I think your approach is a laudable approach. You outlined in great detail the risk to human health, the risk to human life, in not in fact making vehicles as safe as possible. You talked about the larger context of making sure that road design was good, that the rules and regulations were sensible. There are many factors that feed into safety on the road, cars being part of it but certainly not 100% of it.

This bill, as has been said, will give the Lieutenant Governor in Council the power to mandate that prescribed motor vehicles registered on or after January 1, 2020, be equipped with prescribed “collision avoidance systems/intelligent drive technologies, post-collision/accident rescue safety technologies or both or any other such life-saving technologies...”

It's a pretty comprehensive bill. I think the fact that you're reaching out into the manufacturing sector—there are questions that are raised about jurisdiction. I think the member for Kitchener–Conestoga explored that. It will be useful to hear your follow-up comments, because I think there are practical difficulties with implementation, and I would be curious to see exactly how you will address those.

In my previous experiences I've worked with the former leader of the NDP, Jack Layton, on climate and energy efficiency issues. We were very interested in what California had done about energy efficiency—the need to drive auto technology so that cars have much better fuel consumption. What we found is that it's very difficult in Canada to shape what the market will be in the United States. California is a very different animal. It's got a population the size of Canada, an economy probably about the same size, but it does not have an auto industry. It's a buyer. It can say, "Here's a huge market. If you want to be in this market, these are the standards you have to meet."

We're in a very different situation. I was meeting with a representative from General Motors the other day, talking cap-and-trade, as a matter of fact, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. He's an interesting representative. He said to me—and I had known this sort of vaguely before—that about 90% to 95% of the vehicles we produce are exported. So what we produce is something that has to be accepted in the markets that are going to be taking those cars in. It's that reality that we produce and we sell. We aren't the buyer who determines how manufacturers are going to shape their product. We're a seller. We have to make sure we conform with what the buyer wants.

I've seen this before in Canada when we've had the debate on efficiency. In the end, it's a question of, is that going to fit with where the United States is at? Because if it doesn't, our manufacturers aren't going to retool. It's as simple as that. I'm curious to see how this will work in tandem on a North American basis with American legislators and the standards that they want to set. We aren't going to be in a position—we don't have the luxury of setting a standard for what is really, in North American terms, a very small market. It has to be accessible across the continent.

I know that governments have been criticized before, and rightly, for not moving forward on energy efficiency in the vehicle sector, but I have to say that Canada, in the end, will follow what the Americans do, and Ontario just as much. We will follow what the Americans do. It will be the federal government that will make this decision. I'm curious as to how you put those pieces together.

We do have the ability in Canada, in Ontario, to address some other safety issues. We could have put side guards under large trucks, and that's something that hasn't happened. This is not really high-tech, and it's something you can do on an after-market basis. A truck comes into Ontario, manufactured no matter where; you can take it into a shop, put side guards, and put it out on the street. We could be doing that now, and it's something that has been called for a number of times for protection of cyclists. I understand the interest in going high-tech, but let's do some low-tech in an area where we have the jurisdiction and the authority to act now.

I'm curious as to the practical steps that the member has for seeing this implemented. Right now, I have substantial questions. I think the member from

Kitchener-Conestoga raised a lot of those. I hope that in the course of this debate we can look at other elements of safety, but in the end, Speaker, through you, the member has to show in practical terms how that would be implemented for us to support the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate. The member from Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm going to take a bit of a different approach. I know we heard criticism about what the manufacturers think and what the Americans think. I think we have to think about Ontario motorists, Ontario pedestrians, and their safety.

I think what the member from Mississauga-Erindale is all about is he's saying, "How can we prevent unnecessary deaths and accidents on Ontario roads?" This is the key crux of his initiative here. It's like every private member's bill: It's a developing process. There's discussion; there are changes; there's, hopefully, committee, where we can examine some of the implications of how to implement some of the intentions in the bill.

1600

As you know, the issue before most Ontarians right now is, they say, "I would love to have all of these added safety features, but I can't afford them." Therefore, safety, in many cases, as a result of what the manufacturers—the way they treat safety is, it depends on your pocketbook. If you've got the money, you can buy safety. That shouldn't be the case. I think that's the premise of the member's bill: that safety shouldn't be a pocketbook, first-come, first-served issue. If certain technologies save lives, they should be available. He's trying to put a framework about how to enhance safety in the manufacturing of future vehicles, whereas, right now, as I said, those who can afford them can have all the safety devices. Those who can't afford the safety devices don't have the features, like the lane departure technology. They don't have all these critical, expensive features that others can get. "Can we afford a backup camera? Can we afford the devices that anticipate potholes, the front-crash prevention technology, the adaptive headlights, the blind spot detection? Oh, we can't afford the blind spot detection. It's an added feature. Only Mercedes-Benzes and Lexuses have it." We have to think about people who drive Fords and Chevys. That's what the member is trying to do. He's trying to say that we in this Legislature should not just think of the Americans in California and we shouldn't just think of the manufacturers; let us put safety on their agenda. Let them start thinking of ways of making these safety features available to all Ontarians, not just the wealthy. Right now, that is what is happening. You can't afford a lot of these safety features.

Also, there's the whole thing about if you do get in an accident, the first responders can't detect how to extract you because the gas lines are so complex. So that is a very good suggestion that he has in his bill.

Whether we discuss and dialogue with other provinces or with the federal government, that is what this bill is all about: starting these discussions.

Let's not bury our heads in the sand like we did with seat belts. There were so many people who were saying,

"I'll never wear a seat belt. It's against my civil rights." How many lives have seat belts saved?

I remember how at one time only the rich could afford airbags. Now I think all cars have airbags.

The manufacturers can do it, but we have to encourage them. We have to work with them.

The member is trying to put these very important safety concepts—he's trying to change the paradigm here. We should be driving the safety agenda, not the people at Toyota. We should be driving it, and let them work with us.

Sure, it has some technical issues with jurisdiction, perhaps, but those things can be worked out.

We have to say that we want affordable safety technology that's available to all Ontarians and not just the ones who buy a Mercedes or Lexus and all these things. Let the poor, let the working man and woman, let the small business person afford basic technology that saves lives, saves money and makes our roads safer.

That's why I think this bill is worth supporting. Let it go forward with some debate. Talk to the manufacturers. Talk to the Californians. Let's try to make our roads safer.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have a short time to speak, and I appreciate the time.

I have an article here from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. This was announced a little while ago. It was about installing automatic emergency brakes on all US vehicles by the year 2022. How many vehicles are made in the United States that come to Canada? This is going to be an issue if we want these collision avoidance systems on our cars before that. It covers all kinds of vehicles, from General Motors to BMW to Mazda. It covers all kinds of models of cars and makes of cars. So I can see an issue in this bill with getting the United States to come on board with this type of thing, especially with the amount of cars that are imported from the United States into Canada. They would have to install quite a bit of this technology in order to export their vehicles here. It could involve a significant impact on trade between our two countries in the car industry.

The other thing I'd like to talk about is the city of Stratford in my riding. They have installed all kinds of infrastructure to make the roads talk to lights that talk to cars. They're going to start testing this technology soon, but I don't think a time frame now of four years is going to allow for some of this stuff to be tested properly. Years ago, Stratford launched a city-wide wi-fi project, and it laid 50 kilometres of fibre-optic cable and installed wireless antennas across the city. Soon after, tech companies came looking for a real-world arena in which to test their products. They have always had to go somewhere else to test product, Canadian cars; they have had to go to California or someplace to do this. Now we have a place in Stratford, Ontario, with this technology that they have installed. As their mayor, Dan Mathieson, said, we're the petri dish now for this new technology.

Now Stratford hopes to take advantage of new provincial rules governing the testing of autonomous cars—that is, cars that drive themselves down the road and also have many of the safety features that the member opposite has been talking about in his bill—so that we can test them close to home, and certainly in winter conditions, as we all enjoy in this province.

The time frame that the member is talking about in this bill is an issue. We have all kinds of auto parts manufacturers in this province right now—Toyota, Honda; a couple are located in my riding. How do we gear up fast enough for this change to laws if it comes through? I certainly know there are going to be some issues with the federal jurisdiction. But I think a lot of the technology is here. It's the testing of it; it's places to test these vehicles. We're very fortunate that Stratford has looked ahead and we can move forward on this, but I really do believe that the time frame is one of the biggest issues here, especially when we're competing with the United States in the car manufacturing industry.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Its stated purpose, as it says in the title, is to ensure the use of life-saving technologies.

Like others in this House, I drive highways in this province quite regularly. One of them that I drive on the most is the QEW. It's a busy road, and one of the most congested in North America. Unfortunately, I see a lot of accidents on that road. Sometimes it's a fender-bender, but sometimes it's a lot worse. There was a news report at the tail end of last year which said that traffic fatalities in Toronto in 2015 were at the highest level in five years. Another report said that Hamilton had 17 traffic fatalities last year: lives lost, hearts broken, families left behind and lives changed forever.

So, yes, Speaker, I'm in favour of doing whatever we can to make sure our roads are safer—safer for drivers and their passengers, safer for cyclists and safer for pedestrians. But I'm not sure how much can be accomplished with this bill.

Firstly, the bill says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations." There's no directive to make regulations. We're only opening up the possibility of regulations being made, so who knows when that might be done or what will be done?

1610

There are certainly a lot of new technologies that are becoming better and, as is usually the case, cheaper. Experimental driverless cars, from what I understand, are on North American roads as we speak. I don't know what it would be like to sit in one without having complete control of a vehicle, but it certainly points to how far the technology has come.

But does Ontario have the jurisdiction to dictate these rules? Automotive manufacturing standards come under the jurisdiction of the federal government, although Ontario does have the ability to mandate additional safety equipment or retrofits, and Ontario already has that

authority. I'm not sure that this bill changes anything in that regard.

It isn't clear to me how the provincial government could implement this bill in practice, but there are a number of things that could be done to make our roads safer, things that are clearly within the province's jurisdiction.

Some time ago, I met with a constituent who raised concerns about tinted windows being a problem. I looked into the matter and found out that, unlike other jurisdictions, Ontario has no law governing how much a car window could be tinted. I wrote to the Minister of Transportation asking that he investigate how we might regulate tinted windows, especially as we knew that there was a crackdown needed to be happening at that time on the use of cellphones while driving.

When Bill 31 was introduced, there was no mention of it, and I argued for it to be included during the debate. The NDP put forward an amendment at committee to include it in the bill. Unfortunately, the amendment failed and we still don't have any rules about how much car windows can be tinted.

Speaker, that's just one example of a simple thing that could be done to make our roads safer, and I wish the government would have listened at that time.

I congratulate the member for thinking outside the box and for bringing this bill forward. I will be supporting it, but as I said, I think there's a lot that we can do that is within Ontario's jurisdiction. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm happy to stand up today to speak to the Highway Traffic Act amendment proposed here today to keep our roads safer through the use of intelligent drive technologies. I think this would be an opportunity for a lot of our vendors and a lot of the auto sector to go ahead and make these changes that would make sure that people are safer when driving.

A majority of us spend a lot of time on the road. I'm on the road almost six hours a day through my commute, and I understand how difficult it can be sometimes to remain safe. You see so many little things happen that happen due to human error, as the member said earlier. If those things are avoidable through the use of technology, it would be great to put these technologies into play and have these safety features available in vehicles.

I think that safety features—

Interjection.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Pardon? You're distracting.

Some of these safety mechanisms are going to be very helpful to us. You can see that there will be a number of things that they'll do to prevent accidents and fatalities on our roads. It will make our roads safer, and that's been a goal of our government, to ensure that we have safer roads and safer highways, and make everybody's commute safer.

Looking at the front-crash prevention/avoidance technology systems would help a lot of cars slow down and

be able to avoid the smaller fender-benders or bumper accidents.

If we look at the lane departure warning systems, they'll help avoid doing lane changes—that will be very helpful to people who are driving on the highways. Our highways are busy. We're a growing province and we need to have these safety mechanisms in play to ensure that everybody is safe on the roads. If there's something that we can do to avoid human error, why would we not go ahead and move forward with that? I think this is a great opportunity for manufacturers to look at some of these things and to work on them so that they have these things available.

I personally do have a back-view camera in my car, and it is helpful to be able to reverse-park and to be able to park in smaller spots, especially being downtown. Sometimes there are spots you must park in, and that makes it a lot easier.

These safety mechanisms that have been put into play have been helpful in making our roads safer. If we continue to add things to our vehicles, it would be helpful to all drivers, whether it be new drivers who need the extra cushioning of having safety features or whether it be everybody who is on the road.

I think the after-accident technology that was talked about would be great as well, because it would help save lives. The post-collision accident rescue safety technologies could help save a lot of families a lot of heartache. There is very little that first responders can do when they get there, but if they have this technology available to them, it would be something that would assist them and make their job easier and help save numerous lives.

Looking, also, at pothole detectors, I know that when you go up some of our streets and highways, potholes can be a cause of accidents and a cause of damage to vehicles. All of these accidents impact our insurance rates and such things, which are important to the residents of Brampton–Springdale. If we could avoid accidents, we'd have lower insurance rates and safer roads, and it would make it easier for drivers, young and old, to be on the road. It would make it more cost-effective for them to be on the road.

Some of the other members did speak about technology not being only for people who can afford it. We want everybody to be safe on the roads. It's important that everybody have access to vehicles that can offer this technology, not only people who are buying higher-end vehicles and can afford higher-end vehicles. It's only fair that everybody have equal access to being safe on the road. We continue to promote different ideas to bring safety to our roads.

I looked at a number of the other things that were included in this bill, and I think it would be a great time to go ahead. With technology changing as quickly as it is, we're lucky to have access to all of these new methods of being safe and bringing safety to our roads. So why would we not move ahead and have these things implemented? It will take some time for testing, no doubt, but

those technicalities can be worked on as we move forward with these proposed amendments.

The blind spot detection technology system will notify the driver of obstructions in his or her blind spot. It provides visual monitoring of a motor vehicle's blind spots, making lane changes easier, making it easier to drive on the highway, making it easier to make better lane changes and make better choices, making it easier for drivers. I think that, all in all, applying these technologies and having them accessible for everybody—for all drivers—will make our Ontario roads and highways safer. As well, it will make people safer and make it easier to be on the road. I will be fully supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to participate in the debate on Bill 192, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Keep our Roads Safer through the use of Intelligent Drive Technologies). This bill requires that prescribed motor vehicles be equipped with prescribed collision avoidance systems, otherwise known as intelligent drive technologies, as of January 2020. It also gives cabinet the power to determine which vehicles are prescribed and which systems are to be included. It goes on to say that manufacturers and drivers who do not comply with the provisions of the act can be fined.

Certainly, New Democrats are strongly supportive of any measures to improve road safety and protect Ontarians from injury on the road. However, we have questions whether this bill, as it is currently written, will actually achieve these goals. We know, as others have pointed out, that the bill kind of wades into federal jurisdiction by regulating automotive manufacturing standards; in other words, by requiring automotive manufacturers to include certain equipment. There is a jurisdictional question about provincial authority to make that kind of requirement on automotive manufacturers.

Also, as has been pointed out, there are certain things that the government could do now—very simple fixes—to improve road safety. Truck sidebars have been mentioned; tinted windows have been mentioned. Snow tires are another—we know that snow tires are mandatory in Quebec, but they are still optional in Ontario. Requiring the installation of winter tires could certainly help reduce collisions in icy road conditions.

1620

As I said, we have questions about the ability of this bill to actually achieve what it sets out to do. We would encourage the government to move forward with some of the immediate initiatives that could really help to address road safety issues in the near term rather than the longer term.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I want to start by congratulating my colleague from Mississauga–Erindale for bringing forward the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Keep our Roads Safer through the use of Intelligent Drive Technologies), 2016.

I know there has been some light criticism of this bill, but what I think is really important to remember when discussing this bill is that we've started a new conversation about safety. Absolutely, there have to be some things that may need to be ironed out, but I think it's a great start.

One of the most interesting facts mentioned was that a lot of these safety measures are available in high-end vehicles. That seems to be quite unfair, because all lives are equal and there should be no reason that normal, small or mid-sized cars shouldn't have these life-saving devices.

As well, there is the option to have this technology card which would identify things such as where the gas lines are so the first responders can quickly come to the accident scene and possibly save lives.

I commend my colleague, and I hope the entire House will support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Mississauga–Erindale to wrap up.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: When I spoke originally, I said that I would look forward to some constructive suggestions, which I haven't heard.

But first of all, I want to thank all the speakers who spoke on this bill, who talked about and raised some issues.

In my mind, safety should be our first concern, and we as legislators should be driving that agenda. That is our responsibility. It's our responsibility to make sure that roads are safe. It is our responsibility to make sure that fatalities on the road can decrease constantly.

The technologies that I have mentioned—and some speakers said this already—are already here. The only problem is that these technologies are only available in the high-end vehicles. In the low-end vehicles, these technologies are not incorporated. So it looks like it becomes that the lives of the rich are more important than the lives of the people who cannot afford expensive cars.

Interjection: All lives are important.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I think all lives are important, and we need to take all the steps to ensure that.

In my mind, a little nudging to the manufacturers to make sure that these technologies are available in all vehicles is not a bad idea. I would like to encourage all manufacturers to move ahead and provide these technologies in all vehicles.

The issue of jurisdiction has been raised. Maybe there is an issue that we need to work on with the other levels of government, both at the federal level and also at the North American level. But that shouldn't stop us from saying that we are now going to advocate for technologies that can save lives. That's why I am actually advocating for this bill. Technologies change, and we should constantly evaluate these technologies and should do everything possible to make sure that we can incorporate technologies that can save lives.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time for private members' public business has expired.

EATING DISORDERS AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA SENSIBILISATION AUX TROUBLES DE L'ALIMENTATION

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot item number 39, standing in the name of Mr. Thibeault.

Mr. Thibeault has moved second reading of Bill 189, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member. Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is now referred to?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: The Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

PENSION PLANS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. French has moved private member's notice of motion number 73.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carries? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Congratulations.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (KEEP OUR ROADS SAFER THROUGH THE USE OF INTELLIGENT DRIVE TECHNOLOGIES), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE ACCURUE GRÂCE À L'EMPLOI DE TECHNOLOGIES DE CONDUITE INTELLIGENTE)

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Takhar has moved second reading of Bill 192, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to lifesaving technologies.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carries? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill will be referred to?

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is it the will of the House to send this to that committee? Carried.

Congratulations.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2016, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's indeed a pleasure to resume the debate on Bill 135. When I spoke about this last, I went through a number of points that I thought were problematic to this whole bill. Certainly, one of them was that there was no requirement for the minister to hold consultations with Ontarians or people within the energy sector. The bill only suggests groups, later writing that the minister must consult with groups "that the minister considers appropriate given the matters being addressed by the long-term energy plan."

I want to refer the House to an article on this bill that I found, by Canadian Energy Perspectives. In it, it says, "It is in direct control of every policy instrument available. From a governance perspective, it could lead one to wonder whether there are any checks and balances left in the system at all."

It goes on to say, "What is the residual independent authority of the agencies? The OEB and the IESO (and the OPA before it) were established to use their independent processes and statutory objectives to implement the broad objectives of energy policy as reflected in legislation. If they are now to solely implement government plans and directives, then what is the value of their independent fact-finding and judgment in the implementation of their statutory objectives?"

This is certainly a problem, Madam Speaker.

"For example, the IESO has been urging a greater reliance on markets both for energy and capacity. It is not clear how this is possible if the government is determining the outcomes. As well, the OEB has commenced a regional planning exercise which was supposed to address trade-offs between resource types (transmission, generation and conservation). It now appears that the government will make all of those trade-offs."

There are too many checks and balances that have been eliminated in this bill. That will give the minister, in my mind, just a little bit too much power when energy policy is developed, without proper agencies overlooking those decisions.

So the question is, "What is the criteria and process by which the government will develop plans and directives?"

The criteria that the OEB was supposed to apply to the review of integrated power system plans was by reference to prudence and cost effectiveness as determined in an open hearing. While people may be critical of the planning criteria historically applied by the OPA and the OEB, planning requires trade-offs between a number of factors—such as efficiency, reliability, environmental impact, economic development, etc. The government clearly makes these types of trade-offs in other infrastructure areas—roads, hospitals, etc. Will these criteria now apply to energy; will the government develop new criteria; or will there be no meaningful criteria at all?”

1630

These are good questions that have been brought by Canadian Energy Perspectives.

“What is the purpose of the new directive powers?”

“Transmission planning and development has proven to be challenging. In both Alberta and Ontario there have been concerns raised about the effectiveness of the process for attracting new entry. There could be lessons learned from both jurisdictions. It is not clear how those lessons can be incorporated if the only process that the legislation puts in place is that the government will decide if, when, and how new transmission should be developed. As for storage, it provides a function that a number of existing services and assets can now provide, most at a lower cost. It is not clear why the government should be choosing that particular technology over other, competing approaches.

“As a result, although Bill 135 is clear that authority for every electricity decision will reside with the government, it does not address how the government will exercise that authority. Given the magnitude of the issues involved, one can only hope that the government will develop new governance models to guide the exercise of its apparently unrestricted powers.”

This is a cause for concern for members on this side of the House: that there will be too much power left with the energy minister in deciding these types of issues. I want to remind you, Speaker, that years ago the Green Energy Act was implemented and what it did to areas of rural Ontario where I come from, where Perth–Wellington is, where the fight—I guess I can put it “fight”—or the turbulence caused by the wind turbine issue certainly is still evident in rural Ontario—we have people still fighting these wind farms, as they call them. We see the government approving new installations of these wind turbine farms even though we don’t really need any more power right now.

We even see them okaying some of these projects around sensitive areas, and there has been some court action because of this. We see the approval especially of one up near Collingwood, which is very problematic or very disturbing in that the approval by the environment minister on this type of project—I’m certain he had consultations with the energy minister too—could have some very serious conflicts with airports in that area. The municipality has no power to stop that because their

planning rights were taken away from them with the implementation of the Green Energy Act.

It’s interesting that these projects right now, Speaker—even though there are so many of these turbines in operation right now in Ontario, they still only supply about 4% of the power, so they have been as effective as this government had wished.

Also, it means that the government can make crucial decisions regarding the expansion of natural gas without ever consulting companies such as Union Gas or Enbridge. In addition, even if the government does consult these groups, they are under no obligation to act on their advice. This is not taking good advice from people who are in the business, and this is something that I think any legislator should do. If they are going to propose this type of legislation, why not act on the advice of the people who are in the business? I’m not going to ask you, Speaker, to go out and milk my cow, because you probably don’t know how to do it.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I do.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Well, you may over there. But what I’m saying is that you have to take advice from people who know what they are doing.

They are only required to consider the results of such consultation. We see that there are quite a few holes in this legislation that probably could be tightened up with the proper amendments—if the government does accept any of our amendments. I would certainly hope that the energy minister does consider that if this legislation moves forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again I welcome the opportunity to speak to Bill 135. I listened intently to the member from Perth–Wellington—his last nine minutes. He mentioned something about cows. That got me thinking about Western movies. What this bill reminds me of is the famous Western movie *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*.

There is a good in this bill.

Interjection: There is?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, there is. The part about measuring efficiency for water: That’s a good initiative. There are some problems with it, and that’s the bad, because there are a few issues about how that efficiency is measured. In the case of a greenhouse, greenhouse A might use less power than greenhouse B, but greenhouse B might produce a lot more produce. So its efficiency per production unit is higher, but it could be that it’s deemed less efficient. That’s something where good and bad could be found.

The ugly part of this bill is that—

Miss Monique Taylor: It’s everything else.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, yes, basically: everything else. It puts way too much power and onus in the hands of the Minister of Energy. It could be that the government thinks that their ministry and ministers are all-knowing, and that’s their opinion, but we’ve had a lot of experience in this province with good initiatives—like

the Green Energy Act—gone bad because of wanting to push things through so quickly that they didn't look at all the consequences. It took something like green energy, at which everyone should have embraced—but in rural Ontario, in many places, green energy is a very contentious, bad issue. It never should have been like that. If they had actually looked and been more careful about how this act was implemented—and this could turn out to be the very same thing. We don't want that to happen again.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I listened to the member from Perth–Wellington. I think he made some valid comments. The only thing is that we are now at third reading, and we've been at third reading, I think, for six hours—

Hon. James J. Bradley: We never used to have any third reading.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes. I remember that when I was here in opposition, the Harris government didn't allow third reading debate—zero hours. All I'm saying is, debate is great, but this bill went through the committee process without any amendments. It went through second reading, and it went through third reading. We're here, so let's get on and make some fixes that are necessary in our energy system and make our system more cognizant of the need to conserve water. That's one of the main things in this bill. In this province, we are wasting too much water, and this bill will help address that in part. So let's get on with dealing with the issues at hand for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I did appreciate the opportunity to listen to my colleague from Perth–Wellington, a member who has come to Queen's Park to represent his constituents and who has first-hand experience of the damage that has been done in his community with this government's Green Energy Act and how it has pitted a community against its residents when it comes to things like windmills and unwanted energy projects in their backyards.

The member opposite talked about the fact that we have third reading. I think it's ever so important, especially with this government, that we have an opportunity to actually engage in further debate, because we've seen the problems that this government has put forward in terms of their legislation. Look at the committee recently, when the government themselves have tabled numerous and abundant numbers of amendments to their own bill, which makes you believe that they've not done the proper consultation ahead of time. We're thankful for third reading debate to remind the government of some of the errors they've made. You look at the example with this particular bill. There's still no requirement for the minister to hold consultations with Ontarians or with people within the energy sector. The bill only suggests that the minister must consult with groups the minister considers appropriate.

1640

I'll give you an example of that. If the government can make critical decisions regarding the expansion of natural gas without even consulting, for example, Union Gas or Enbridge—in addition, even if the government does consult these groups, it is under no obligation to act on their advice. They are only legislatively required to consider the results of such consultation.

I think my colleagues' comments today bring light to some of these concerns. We hope the government will listen and that we'll see some of these changes put forward, as we have asked for in other bills and not got.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm always honoured to rise in the House and to have a couple of moments to speak about bills that are before us.

As we know, this bill is here on third reading for us to debate. Government members are saying that the Conservatives didn't do third reading and they don't have to do third reading. He also talked about the fact that there were no amendments to this bill made. Quite frankly, Speaker, from my time in this House and especially in the last couple of years, if there were no amendments to this bill, that's probably because the government turned down every amendment that the opposition put forward, because that's the way things happen here in this House.

This bill is concerning with the lack of consultation and the lack of oversight that the minister will have.

I just want to touch quickly and read from the member from Toronto–Danforth's opening debate on this. He said, "I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill, Bill 135, a bill that slams shut the door on public intervention in the development of hydro planning in this province, a bill that one presenter who came to committee described as giving the Minister of Energy the powers of an energy czar—a massive concentration of power in the hands of one person and one cabinet. Because of that, this is a bill that will be condemned for years to come. This isn't one that will simply be lost in the woodwork; this is one that, in the future when there are inquiries into electricity scandals, will be cited. Committees, judges and commissions of inquiry will trace back where damaging, expensive and scandalous decisions started out, and they will have started out with this bill."

We have some serious concerns with this bill, Speaker, so I appreciate the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? Response? I return to the member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Eglinton–Lawrence, Kitchener–Conestoga and Hamilton Mountain for their comments.

As was brought out, consultation is in this bill in some aspects but it doesn't have to be listened to, and that's a problem that we have with this bill: that the bill will give

power to just a certain few in the Ministry of Energy, which can be quite dangerous. The minister is not compelled to listen to experts in the field, as has been mentioned. The minister is not compelled to listen, really, to anybody but what the minister wants to do.

I would hope that the minister thinks about that very seriously before making any decisions with this act or to implement this act in a way that may be dangerous to the people of Ontario. I think that's my main concern with the whole thing: that accountability measures are not in this act pertaining to ministerial decisions. As we've seen from past history over the last number of years, that can be a dangerous thing, where we have too few people with too much power, and I certainly have real concerns about this. I do hope that the minister will listen to that and make decisions based on the best evidence that he can find.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is my pleasure to rise today, as MPP for London West, to participate in third reading debate on Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act. On behalf of my constituents and on behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, I want to express my strong opposition to this deeply flawed legislation.

In November, I had the opportunity to speak to second reading of this bill. So to prepare for this third reading debate that is upon us today, I took the time to carefully review the comprehensive input that was provided on the bill by the 14 organizations that appeared in February before the Standing Committee on General Government. Certainly, those are the organizations whose comments are recorded in Hansard. However, I know that many more organizations and individuals also provided written input to committee members raising concerns about the legislation.

As I read through the Hansard of the committee hearings, I found myself wondering how on earth the government is going to be able to address these very substantive recommendations that were being made by the presenters and try to mitigate some of the concerns that were raised.

You can imagine my surprise when I looked at the third reading version of the bill that is before us today and found that it is exactly the same as the bill that was debated at second reading. Not a single amendment was incorporated into the bill. The legislation was reported back to the Legislature exactly as it had been before those 14 organizations took the time to appear before the committee and before the experts had an opportunity to raise their concerns and highlight some of the major problems with the bill.

Clearly, this bill confirms the experience that we have seen with this lack of listening and the lack of respect that was shown to the expert input that was provided. All of this confirms that the government has learned nothing from the gas plant scandal. They have learned nothing about the pitfalls of allowing political interference to contaminate energy-planning decisions.

Another thing that this bill confirms is the government's total disregard for the office of the Auditor General of Ontario. Basically, with the provisions included in Bill 135, the government has dismissed the in-depth review and audit that was conducted of the electricity planning system process by the Auditor General in 2015.

We know that since 2004, in Ontario, there has been legislation requiring the province to develop an Integrated Power System Plan and then to update the plan every three years. However, the auditor found, in her 2015 review, that the Liberal government had failed to implement an independent and transparent long-term energy planning and approval process in accordance with the legislation. Not a single Integrated Power System Plan—otherwise known as an IPSP—has ever been approved in the province of Ontario.

The auditor said, "Over the last decade, this power system planning process has essentially broken down, and Ontario's energy system has not had a technical plan"—in other words, an IPSP—"in place for the last 10 years." She went on to say, "Operating outside the checks and balances of the legislated planning process, the Ministry of Energy has made a number of decisions about power generation that have resulted in significant costs to electricity consumers."

The auditor revealed that the oversupply of energy resulted in Ontarians paying \$32.6 million between 2009 and 2014 to other jurisdictions to take the surplus power that we were generating. This energy surplus was clearly a result of the government's ad hoc approach to planning the electricity system. In the end, what we saw was electricity being sold at fire sale prices to neighbouring jurisdictions while the people we represent, the people I represent in London West, are struggling with skyrocketing hydro rates that show no sign of slowing down.

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This is not the only example of how the system has broken down. Last year, we saw the government refuse to submit its Hydro One privatization scheme to the Ontario Energy Board for review or even to disclose the analyses that were prepared for the Ed Clark privatization panel. We saw the Financial Accountability Officer blocked from access to government documents about the sale by invocations of cabinet secrecy, and all of this in the face of promises by the Premier that her plan to broaden the ownership of Hydro would be transparent, professional and independently validated.

Speaker, lack of transparency seems to be the modus operandi of this government. It's happening with another bill that we were just talking about this morning in this Legislature, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act. Again, with that bill, the government is blocking the Financial Accountability Officer from gaining access to documents about cap-and-trade and again they are citing cabinet secrecy. But as my colleague the member for Toronto—Danforth has asked, how is the Financial Accountability Officer supposed to verify the effectiveness of the government's climate change initiatives without being able to access details of the

initiatives? Again, while we see the government promising that revenues raised through cap-and-trade will be spent transparently and effectively, there are no legislative protections included within that legislation to prevent the government from spending cap-and-trade revenues on basically anything it wants.

Another example of how broken the system is: We just recently learned of yet another OPP investigation into email deletion related to the cancellation of the Windstream deal on offshore wind power. That's currently the subject of a \$475-million lawsuit against the government. It's pretty clear that the ad hoc approach that has been in place for the last decade is not working to ensure that public good within the province.

The government had an option. They could do what the 2004 Electricity Restructuring Act mandates them to do, but instead we have seen them move in the other direction. They have basically been ignoring their statutory obligations, making up their own process, making ad hoc decisions outside of any formalized structure. Rather than return to what the legislation requires, we now have before us Bill 135, which enshrines and formalizes the ad hoc process that has gotten us into the mess that we're in over the last decade.

What Bill 135 does is it replaces the process that is in the 2004 legislation with an act that effectively makes the Minister of Energy the energy czar for the province of Ontario. It centralizes control for all energy planning in the office of the minister. It removes statutory requirements for public consultation and input into power planning and it reduces the mandatory oversight role of the Ontario Energy Board to a simple review of the capital costs of implementation. No longer will the Ontario Energy Board and the IESO have planning and approval authority. Instead, both organizations will be relegated to becoming mere implementers of the minister's direction, and this is direction that is being given on the largest single net infrastructure investments that are made by the province of Ontario.

In her 2015 report, the Auditor General, when she was describing this ad hoc planning process, said that "this plan was ... not sufficient for addressing Ontario power system's needs and for protecting electricity consumers' interests."

Bill 135 is enshrining for future generations a process that the Auditor General clearly found to be deficient. In their presentation to the committee that received input on Bill 135, the Society of Energy Professionals said that "the effect of Bill 135, as written, is inherently incompatible with complying with system planning best practices and with the recommendation of the Auditor General's report with respect to the system planning process."

They go on to say, "The society believes that the proposed alterations to the planning process would severely hamper the political independence and effectiveness of the electricity system planning process and oversight in a way detrimental to the public good."

Tom Adams, in his presentation to the committee, was even stronger. He said, "Eliminating the last vestiges of

independence, making the IESO and OEB extensions of the Ministry of Energy, exacerbate rather than mitigate the deficiencies identified by the Auditor General." He also says, "If this legislation passes as it's written, we'll lose some of the checks and balances that are in place in the existing system." He admits he has "criticisms of the existing system, but losing these checks and balances would be a retrograde step. We need them. We need more sober second thought before we leap into multi-billion-dollar decisions."

There's so much testimony that was provided to the committee, it's hard to know what quotes to share today in my remarks.

Clearly, what we have seen is a government that has no interest in giving the public the ability to analyze and provide input into energy policies, a government that has no interest in having independent, third-party assessments of their energy plans and no interest in getting the kind of analysis they need so that they can decide whether or not to proceed with energy projects.

This is particularly troubling when we consider the costs of these energy infrastructure projects and we consider the public dollars that have been wasted because of the mistakes that were made in the past. We saw \$1 billion and more—and counting—wasted on the relocation of the gas plants. We saw \$2 billion squandered on the implementation of smart meters.

Not only are these energy system plans costly but they also carry with them major economic and environmental risks. Mark Winfield, in his deputation to the committee, said, "They carry risk of underbuilding or overbuilding infrastructure in a period of high economic uncertainty, and they carry risks of technological lock-in in what may be the most significant period of technological innovation in the electricity sector since the emergence of utility systems a century ago...."

"The proposed legislation would mean that system plans and their contents would be subject to no meaningful external review. There would be no review of their economic rationality, cost-effectiveness or prudence through the Ontario Energy Board. There would be no environmental review under the Environmental Assessment Act or any other mechanism. There would be no review in terms of their resilience and ability to adapt to changing economic, social or technological circumstances."

This was from a deputant, Mark Winfield, as I mentioned, who is an associate professor of environmental studies at York University and chair of the Sustainable Energy Initiative, so he is someone who knows about energy policy.

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The other big concern with Bill 135 is the changes that it has made to the public consultation process. Several of the deputants who spoke to the committee commented specifically on the risks inherent in changing the way public consultation is received. The Canadian Environmental Law Association, which was speaking on behalf of seven public interest organizations, all of which are opposed to Bill 135, said:

"There's no public consultation on the IESO's technical reports," which means that "the long-term energy plan consultation is narrow. The public will not have access to all the documents that it needs to look at, understand, review and challenge those plans. Section 25.29(5) states that the minister must only publish 'any relevant background materials or other information the minister considers appropriate.'"

It does not require disclosure of all background material and all evidence that the minister is considering in making the energy plans, so basically it gives the minister total discretion to decide what materials it considers appropriate to be released to the public during the consultation on the energy plans.

Another concern that was raised by the Canadian Environmental Law Association is around the lack of consideration for environmental issues in Bill 135. There is no requirement that the long-term energy plan take into account sustainable development or environmental issues. There's no requirement that conservation is the first priority and that it also consider renewable energy, environmental impacts of proposals in the plan and environmental impacts of alternatives.

With Bill 135, all of the protections that have been in place for the last decade, even though they haven't been enforced as they should have been—the legislative protections that had existed are gone. They are lost. Ontarians will no longer have access to that regulatory framework that ensured that the public good was at the centre of energy planning decisions.

The unaccountable, closed process that the government has consistently followed over the last decade, even though it was not in accordance with the legislation, has now become formalized. That is now the new legislative framework within which the government will be operating. No longer will Ontarians have a legislated right to be part of decision-making on energy projects.

The bill is a gift to private interests, who will now find it easier than ever before to lobby the government for approval of costly and risky energy projects without any kind of independent public scrutiny. There will no longer be a public process for citizens to intervene and to challenge the minister about energy planning.

Another concern that was raised by the Society of Energy Professionals was about the lack of a public record of the input that is given to the ministry. The public will not even have access to the documentation and the information that the ministry is using to make the decisions.

The society says, "There's no opportunity to vet that input, so stakeholders could be giving erroneous information to the ministry. There's no opportunity for other stakeholders to challenge the veracity of that information, nor do we know what the ministry does with the information. There's a potential danger that the ministry would use incorrect information from stakeholders when putting together the plan, because there has never been an opportunity to see what the input is or to test its validity."

Speaker, we know what happens when regulatory bodies like the OEB are relegated to the role of implementers when independent scrutiny is taken away. As I mentioned, we just have to look at smart meters, which came with a financial cost of \$2 billion. We just saw recently, with another piece of legislation that was discussed in this House, the removal of the OEB from review of the transmission sector, and now we see the OEB being excluded from playing any role in the energy-planning process.

Speaker, Bill 135 is a deeply, deeply flawed bill and it should be strongly opposed by all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I simply want to draw it to the attention of the House, because I recall, when I was first elected to the House, that there was no third reading debate by practice, so there was virtually no third reading debate.

That is because first reading is routine, and we understand that. In second reading, there was a robust debate, as there was on this bill, including, I think, the member for Danforth. In fact, he gave a good speech on second reading.

Then the bill goes to the committee, where there's discussion that takes place in committee and, often, hearings from the public. Amendments are proposed, and then it comes back for third reading.

We have now spent over 16 hours on this particular bill. I think that most people have heard all of the very good speeches on it and the input in committee. I think that most members—at least on this side of the House, and maybe even the member for Sarnia—would think that it's time to have a vote on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I do know that it seems sometimes tedious to be debating these bills in third reading when a lot of things have been said already. Certainly, this side of the House has never agreed with this bill, and that's quite evident.

But the thing is that this is the way things work around here: We do allow debate. It's an opportunity for members to put their opinions forward in the House. It's an opportunity for us to try to represent our constituents as best we can. Certainly these debates are part of that process.

I do know that we all have raised objections to this bill on this side of the House, and the member from London—

Interjection: West.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: London West, sorry—the member from London West was very eloquent in her speech. To me, it sounded very well-researched, Speaker. She voices a lot of the negative opinions that certainly this party has with this bill.

So I do know that, sometimes, things in this House get tedious, but that is our job: to debate these bills and to speak about them and, at least, let our constituents know

that we are trying to do our work here and that we want to represent them as best we can. I believe debates of this nature do ensure that.

I want to congratulate, again, the member from London West on her very well-prepared comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to follow the member from London West, who set out, I think, all the critical arguments about why this bill is so bad, so destructive is and one that needs to be defeated.

The member for St. Catharines, with all his virtues—I won't list them all; I only have two minutes, and I know that I would run over and, Speaker, you would shut me down. It would be a terrible thing. But he's arguing that there doesn't need to be a third reading on this particular bill or bills in general.

But in fact, we go through a process where a bill is introduced at first reading. In second reading, we get to talk about the main elements. We get to go to committee and we hear the public's input. We get to question the public for their thoughts. Then we go clause-by-clause.

Typically, Speaker, we come back with a bill that reflects the passage of that time and that process. This bill extraordinarily reflects nothing in terms of what the public had to say and nothing in terms of what the opposition or the third party had to say when we got into clause-by-clause. None of the most glaring deficiencies of this bill have been corrected in the course of second reading or committee hearings.

I think I've said before and I think the member has heard me say that the thing that was most stark—it certainly came from the Auditor General's report—was that this is a government that passes laws and then ignores them. It treats them as guidelines, as suggestions. Certainly, when it comes to power planning, it has not followed its own laws for a decade. That has consequences, Speaker. As flawed as the earlier process may have been, at least there was a requirement that the public had the information in advance of making commentary so they could make informed comments.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I just wanted to propose to the House that now that we have debated Bill 135 for more than 16 hours, it is time to move to the vote on Bill 135. Nothing new is being said in debate.

There is a central principle at stake here, which I just learned about today, which is that honour demands that, to put it in colloquial language, what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

I understand that during the Harris years, the Conservative government never allowed third reading. If, when you were in government, third reading was considered not required and dispensed with, I just have to ask the question: Why would you now think that third reading is that important?

That said, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government always allows third reading. We're not following the Conservative path at all, but it does beg the question: How can the same members—and I know some of the members on that side served in the Harris cabinet and in the Harris government—who sat there and did not support third reading now turn around and say, "We want third reading"? There is something wrong with this principle where it's one set of rules when you're in power and quite another set of rules when somebody else is in power.

That said, we respect the democratic process. We always support third reading. But, Mr. Speaker, 16 hours—and I would urge the members on that side to look at Hansard and see if there's anything new that's being added. I think they will agree that nothing new is being added.

So in the interests of Ontarians, to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being well served, I urge that we move now to a vote on Bill 135.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have this afternoon for questions and comments on this round. I return to the member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank the minister without portfolio, the member for Perth-Wellington, my colleague from Toronto-Danforth and the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for their comments.

I do have to take exception with what was said by the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care about nothing new being said because, quite frankly, if I had not taken the opportunity to review the Hansard, to read what the deputants who came to the committee had to share, I wouldn't have known how blatantly the government has ignored the expertise, the valuable feedback, that was provided on the legislation. So that, to me, is new.

I don't know if all of the members of this Legislature have taken that time to review the committee transcript, but I am glad that I did because there's this perception that there are 20 caucus members here and however many over there, and that we are being politically obstructionist. Well, almost every single deputant who came to the committee raised the exact same concerns, that what Bill 135 is going to do is formalize a process that concentrates political power in the office of the Minister of Energy. It opens the door to further gas plant scandals, to further white elephant energy boondoggles, which is completely contrary to the best interests of the citizens of this province.

So third reading debate is a very important opportunity to let Ontarians know what this Liberal government is doing and how little this Liberal government thinks about the role of independent officers of the Legislature, like the Auditor General, who advised completely against going in this direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 135, the energy statute law. I was going to commend the deputy House leader when he said that—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Paper versions.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, I want to look at the versions, because I understand there was a lot of stalling and a lot of filibustering back in that day by the opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Responsible.

Mr. Robert Bailey: We're doing responsible debate. We're not filibustering, we're not stalling, we're not ringing the bell—I think that's a good thing to do; we should probably be looking at that.

But anyway, I've had the opportunity to listen. I've heard the last part of the debate and I really want to commend the member from London West and of course the member from Perth—Wellington.

I've got a few things I'd like to say about this as well. I've read some of the transcripts from the previous debate here in the Legislature as well. That's when the bill went to the Standing Committee on General Government. The one member said, "Well, it went to committee and there were no amendments." Well, as the member from London West rightly pointed out, any time there are amendments put forward, the government votes them down. So that's a pretty poor argument in my estimation. Back home, we wouldn't even bring that up.

I don't dispute that there need to be changes to these acts, particularly the Green Energy Act. I doubt that Bill 135 is going to propose any changes the people in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton want to see. Specifically, there seems to be an attempt by the legislation to centralize all transmission and electricity sector planning within the Minister of Energy's office and in the hands of political staff.

I remember that the former Premier, Premier McGuinty, said, "Hey, we built 20 or 22 gas plants and we got a couple of them wrong." Well, if they got a couple of them wrong, ladies and gentlemen out there, with all kinds of advice, apparently, and all kinds of people having input, how is this going to be any better? How many more are they going to get wrong? How many more wind turbines, how many more installations that are going to be installed around Ontario are going to be wrong? The minister and his so-called expert staff obviously messed up in the past. According to the words of the former Premier himself, he said, "Hey, we built a bunch of these gas plants and we got a couple of them wrong." I think there's probably a lot more they got wrong than just a couple.

Anyway, instead, those recommendations will be replaced with a self-conducted assessment by the Ministry of Energy. This no doubt means there will never again be a critical report of any sitting government's energy plan. Now, we could change that after the next election. There would probably be inquiries and everything that will be held. We'll probably get to the bottom of it at that time. So for the people out there in television land back home in Sarnia—Lambton, you'll have to wait

until after the next election. Then we'll get to the bottom of all these scandals.

Political staff and communications staff in the minister's office will reduce all future assessment of our energy system and needs to self-congratulatory talking points. You know, they want to get by this debate—would there be any more debates brought up? Some people say, "Oh, there have been 16 hours of debate so we need to move on." Why? "Oh, because we won the election."

Anyway, I suppose we've seen this sort of behaviour before with the same government. Recently, it was reported by several media sources that seven renewable energy companies that donate more than a quarter of a million dollars to the Ontario Liberal Party received contracts from this government during the last round of renewable procurement. The three companies with no history of donations to the party all ended up empty-handed. As a result, there are serious questions about the conduct of this government in respect to energy contracts. I don't see how that's going to serve the public in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton and across this great province any better, as the members from the third party and our party have already outlined.

Centralizing further planning power in the minister's office would only feed the perception that this government will make decisions on the energy file that first and foremost benefit their own party and less so the greater needs of Ontarians. This is a scary thought for the residents of my riding and, I'm sure, across the province.

Lambton county, in the Sarnia—Lambton riding, is on record as an unwilling host to the sort of industrial wind turbine projects that this government has decided to make a political legacy out of. Some legacy: some industrial wind turbine.

I said the other day in the House and I'm going to repeat it again today that I truly believe that if members from that party, the government party, when the rural parts of Ontario had stood up to the former Premier, to this Premier and to the former energy minister and said, "No, we won't accept those"—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: As Mulroney said to John Turner many years ago, "You had an option, sir..." and you could have done better. They didn't do it and now we're stuck with these monstrosities across this great province. Someday we'll get to the bottom of it.

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Hon. Glen R. Murray: Lots of people making money off of it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, there are a lot of people making money off of it, that's right: the contractors.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Glen Murray would have done a better job. He should have been energy minister. He would have done a better job.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. I think the Minister of the Environment would have probably made a better energy minister.

There are some very active groups in Lambton county like the Plympton-Wyoming WAIT, which is We're Against Industrial Turbines, and also one in my home township of Enniskillen called CORE. That's about not signing any leases so they can't bring these industrial wind turbines into Enniskillen township. It has worked pretty good. It's too bad that some of the other parts of the province didn't do something similar because it might have kept these monoliths out of their ridings.

They're prepared to take their fight against the ministry's plans to place wind turbines in the Plympton-Wyoming community all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Unfortunately, you've got to fight your own government with your own volunteer—I was at one of their fundraisers just recently. It cost me a few bucks out of my own pocket, but I didn't mind because I think it's going to a good issue and a good subject. I support them in their efforts and will continue to do everything I can do to help.

There's understandably concern with Bill 135. Moreover, what if there was a minister in place who decided they only want industrial wind turbines to supply energy to the whole province? Where would the reality check come from? The IESO and the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, will have had their mandate and role in Ontario's energy system diminished and neutered. They will simply be reacting to the whims of the minister and his or her staff. It's not that far-fetched of a scenario.

Right now, sitting at the cabinet table for this government, is a minister who has gone on record saying that he would like to see the end of nuclear power generation and the end of natural gas as a source of energy and home heating in Ontario. This would do away with two of the most economical, affordable and reliable sources of energy this province has, to be replaced by what? How would we know that the minister of the day and his or her political staff have done a proper assessment of the impacts of this drastic shift? Would they bother to do a cost-benefit analysis?

We know they didn't do a cost-benefit analysis on the Green Energy Act. The Auditor General said that, and a number of other people who are officers of this House said that. So it wasn't the Tories saying it; it wasn't the NDP. That was officers of this House who said there was no cost-benefit analysis. I don't know how they got to this.

To be honest, I don't know how the backbenchers of the Liberal Party go home on the weekend, see their constituents and hear them talking about their hydro bills and how they can't get proper health care—why? Because there are no dollars left to do it. So I don't know how they go home and do it. I wouldn't want to have to face them.

To be frank, Madam Speaker—I see you've returned to the chair—if we allow for a system where the minister's office has total, unfettered control to be enshrined in legislation, we are just opening the door to costly, costly mistakes. It was this sort of attitude back in 2009

that the then Minister of Energy put on display to push through the industrial wind turbine policy and the Green Energy Act that have now saddled this province and the ratepayers of this province with billions and billions of dollars in contracts.

If Bill 135 leads to that sort of one-sided decision-making process in our energy sector, it will be a disaster for so many people in Ontario. As I said, the former Premier admitted that they had made a number of mistakes.

Again, as I said the other day when this House was debating the need for a public inquiry into public contracts and the energy industry, the energy policies that this government has pushed through have been the ruin of many people in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton. At the end of the day, that's why we're all here, all of us, on all three sides of the House: to speak up for our constituents.

I hear from people every day. I was just on the phone a little while ago. People in the office struggling, whether it's to pay energy bills—a father with a daughter; I think it was a daughter, eight years old. My staff are working overtime. We should be getting some more help from the government to pay my staff and pay all the other members' staff who have to work on these programs to bail people out. This guy owed \$944 on his electricity bill. They shut his hydro off. It's still cool at night, but no hydro. So my staff are back there working overtime to restore this. It's not their fault, it's not that father's and that eight-year-old child's fault; it's the Minister of Energy who made this energy poverty. We've got it here now in Ontario.

Anyway, the Liberal members go home and they say they don't hear this. I don't believe it. I would like to go visit some of their ridings and sit in their constituency offices sometime. I'm sure I would see a lot of people upset.

They're behind on their electrical bills by hundreds and thousands of dollars. Here it is right here: My office had a call the other day from a father who lives with his son who is eight years old. This man just had his power cut off, as I said before. He owes \$944 in arrears. My office is trying to assist the man, but this man and his son were forced to live without the basics of electricity the other night because it has become unaffordable. I don't know if we'll be able to get it turned back on. We will try, but the reality is, how long until he falls behind again?

Nothing in Bill 135 is going to fix that problem. All we're going to have is increasing energy rates and unaffordable energy. I truly wonder sometimes if anyone will be able to undo the damage—and there has been all kinds of damage that this government has brought to the energy system of this province. It's a disgrace. If not, what will happen to the people and businesses in Ontario?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Especially petrochemical.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. The petrochemical industry is a big business in my riding. I deal with them all the time.

This government has proven time and time again that sensible energy policies cannot be developed by the energy minister's office alone, as Bill 135 aims to do. When they've tried, they completely omitted important steps, like for example a cost-benefit analysis.

In my riding, there is something that is known as a utility bank that is run by the Salvation Army and the Inn of the Good Shepherd. I want to commend them for the great work they do. My office works with them on an ongoing basis.

The utility bank came about not long after I was elected, probably a couple of years after I was elected, in 2009 or so. It came about as more and more people started having difficulty making ends meet. Through their fundraising work—these private organizations—and thanks to many generous donations from organizations and business organizations in the Sarnia-Lambton community, there is a fund that people can turn to when they need help to pay their utility bills. I don't know how common these are in the other ridings, but I'd certainly encourage you to talk to groups like the food banks and that to form one.

Unfortunately, electricity has become so expensive for so many people in Ontario that, in my community, the utility bank is overwhelmed and the fund is often out of money within just a few days of the beginning of each month. Because of the amount that people are getting behind, the utility bank is finding it can help fewer people each month because there's more month than there is money. That's an old saying my dad used to have: We had more month than we had money. It's truly a sad state of affairs in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I also want to take just a few minutes to speak about some of the sections of Bill 135—I think I'm going to skip that. We've heard enough of that.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I was looking forward to that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Oh, you wanted to hear that? Well, here is the last part: "(b) prescribe circumstances in which the minister may request that a person mentioned in clause (a) undertake verification, in the prescribed manner, of any information required to be reported under a regulation made under clause (a) or under a notice published under subsection (4)"—more lawyer talk—and "(c) require a person mentioned in clause (a) to comply with a request by the"—more blah blah blah.

The average person out there just wants to get on with their life, and they're saddled with these regulations, with this lawyer talk, and it just makes life more complicated for the average Joe and Jane out there in small town Ontario. Maybe this is the kind of stuff they like in Toronto; I don't know. But it's not what we like down in my part of the country.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Not in Niagara.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Not in Niagara, either.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Maybe Kitchener.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Kitchener or Waterloo—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: What, in fact, is the intent of this section? It reads as though this government is planning to

force Ontarians into mandatory home energy audits. Mandatory energy audits is an idea that will not go over well in Sarnia-Lambton, and I dare say a lot of other parts of Ontario, probably even in suburban Toronto here. This won't go over well.

By forcing homeowners and businesses to report the amount of electricity, water and gas they use, the government is setting themselves up to be able to easily tax the use of these resources somewhere down the road in the form of a sin tax. You spent too much on energy; you should be ashamed, you should be taken out and put in the—in the old days, they had the—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Stockades?

Mr. Robert Bailey: The stockades in the town square. That's where we're heading with this. They're going to have this sin tax that they're going to embarrass people with, and they'll shame you with your neighbours: "You use more energy than the lady and the guy down the street, so you should be ashamed of yourself. Here, pay up a little bit. It'll make you feel better. You'll pay this sin tax." Right?

Mr. Tim Hudak: If you use less, you pay more, too.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. If you use less, you pay more too, so I don't know what they'll—yes, that's a good point. I'm glad you brought that up. That wasn't in my notes here.

How does the average man or woman in this province get ahead? I don't know. I tell you, it's a good thing my late father—well, my mother's gone, too. He wouldn't be very happy with this, I'll tell you that. I can't believe we're into this in Ontario now. I grew up in the 1950s, went to a one-room school, and I'll tell you, this kind of stuff is unbelievable. There are people out there watching right now, I know there are seniors and that, and they're wondering how the heck—where does this stuff come from? They wonder where the green energy came from. I remember when it came through, I thought, "Well, okay, that's the worst it's going to get," but it's not. This stuff just keeps up. I could say a lot more, but it's probably not in the book which would be allowed.

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A few weeks back, Madam Speaker, I met with the Sarnia-Lambton Real Estate Board in Sarnia about a number of issues, and mandatory home energy audits came up. I certainly value the expertise of the members of the real estate board at home and across Ontario as well, and although they were speaking for the province as a whole, property values and market values are what they deal with every day. They were unanimous in their opinion that mandatory home energy audits are a bad idea. They would not only hurt the values of homes, costing homeowners thousands in equity, but they would also now make home ownership less affordable and burden buyers and sellers with even more costs.

Madam Speaker, there's a common theme that has come up again and again in the comments from this side of the House and with the third party as well, and I know the members of the government are hearing it from their constituents as well, and I hope they will start to do

something about it. That theme is: "Life is harder under the Liberals." Life in Ontario is more expensive under the Liberal government.

I'm not going to support Bill 135—maybe people guessed that before I got to this point, but just to make it clear, I won't be supporting this bill. I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate. I know there's a number of members who haven't spoken on Bill 135 yet, from all three parties. I thought maybe the governing party would put somebody up to say something, but they've obviously—I think they want to get home for the weekend. I don't blame them. I want to get home too.

Anyway, it's too important to walk away and not continue the debate here that we've had today. It has been great.

Every time I come into this House, it's a great honour to be here. When you get the opportunity to hear from members from all three sides of the House, you hear a personal story. I always say that private members' business and the end of debate on Thursday afternoon is some of the best part of the week, because I think you hear people's personal stories. I heard different people—I won't go into any of them.

The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane had a good debate last week, and it really made a big impression on me when he talked about his mother coming to Canada. He'll know what I'm talking about there. I thought, where else would you hear that other than here at Queen's Park, in this Legislature? I've heard a hundred stories here since I've been here, and they're very important. It's unfortunate it takes these kinds of bills that come through that we have to debate to be here, but the good part of it is that I've heard a lot of good personal stories from the heart, from all three sides, and so I think it's important that we're here for that.

I said that I won't be supporting this bill. I'm not going to support it at third reading. I don't believe that centralizing planning power for our energy system in one office, the Minister of Energy's—no matter who that minister is or from what party. If we were the government, I wouldn't agree with it either. I don't think that would be right. Maybe if I was the minister, I might think it's okay, but I'd know that it's not the right way to go. That's not the way our system was set up. We need these checks and balances. I couldn't support it for that.

We've already seen too many ideas pushed through by this government on the energy file that have been politically driven, that have ended up costing Ontarians billions—by the Auditor General and others—more in energy costs that will be a drain and a burden on generations to come. Hopefully, a government in the not-too-distant future will be able to reverse a lot of these things and go some small way—it won't happen overnight—to returning Ontario's energy mix, Ontario's economy, back to fair and balanced—like a TV show I watch—get it back to a fair and balanced—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Is that Dragnet or—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Fox News—Bill O'Reilly. Just for the people out there, I recommend it. It's on every night. Bill O'Reilly—fair and balanced.

Whether it's high-priced industrial wind turbine energy rates, ineffective smart meters, gas plants scandals or the sale of Hydro One, the political agenda of the government is making life unaffordable in Ontario.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It has been a pleasure to be able to stand here today and to take part in this debate. I look forward to the rest of the afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand in the House and follow the remarks from the member from Sarnia-Lambton on Bill 135 and several other issues. I would like to agree with him that I actually like Thursday afternoons—maybe not after 5 Thursday afternoon. But Thursday afternoon has some of the best debates in this House because people are, quite frankly, tired and want to go home. But they don't use as many speaking notes. They're more off the cuff. If anyone is at home watching this, they should put it on PVR and go outside.

Thursday afternoon is the time that people, looking at this Legislature, would actually understand what we're talking about, because a lot of other times you look at it and you get—before I was elected, I'd look at it and I'd think that these people have nothing in common with me and there's nothing I can relate to. But on Thursday afternoons, you can relate to these debates.

I have to say to the member from Sarnia-Lambton, it's the first time I've heard the word "stockade" used since I've been elected. So I was listening intently to his speech. He always focuses on his riding, as we all do, and although we are at opposite ends of the province, a lot of the issues that the people in Sarnia-Lambton face are the same issues that people who live in Timiskaming-Cochrane face. Our energy costs are very high. We can all debate why that is and whose fault that is, but the fact is, we have to deal with it because the people themselves, in a lot of cases, aren't able to anymore. I'm going to have 20 minutes to speak on this shortly, and I'll expand on that, but it is an issue that we have to deal with.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments and the humor from the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

I am a little perplexed, though—and I believe the honourable gentleman is a gentleman. As he knows, because we have discussed this, he has a private member's bill which this terrible, downtown Liberal latte-sipping environment minister is supporting, which would be hard to explain, given you keep assigning to me that somehow I am not supportive of nuclear and gas power. I'm not sure how I could be supporting your bill on the record.

The second thing is, I was chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, Mr. Speaker, and—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I just want to clarify to the minister: It's Madam Speaker.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Madam Speaker. It's a force of habit we should all break. Thanks.

But I want to say to the member, and I would suggest you might find this interesting, that I was chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and Economy under Prime Minister Martin and Prime Minister Harper, where I wrote extensively with our team on nuclear power, on natural gas and on climate change. I think the party opposite would find that valuable. But I would not, my dear friend from Sarnia-Lambton, misrepresent your views as being anti-natural gas or anti-nuclear, and I would appreciate it if you'd stop doing it.

I'm quite happy to share with you, my friend—I wrote for the Toronto Star. I wrote a lot on carbon pricing and nuclear energy. Opposition research and the Conservatives have parsed through every word of it to find something they could twist into some pretzel to make it sound like I have a position that I don't.

Climate change and energy are important policies. I think some of the work you're doing as a member is good. We obviously disagree on this bill. But if you actually look at my voting record in the House, my friend, you'll find I voted for budgets and bills that have made unprecedented investments in natural gas and unprecedented investments in nuclear.

That being said, there are some interesting things happening right now. Nova Corp. just won our minister's environment award, which I just presented to them at lunch today.

This is an area that we have to be very sensitive about in Sarnia, and I look forward to working with you because this industry is so critical to the future of your community.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I enjoyed the member from Sarnia-Lambton's comments. As you saw, I paid rapt attention, particularly when he talked about the petrochemical valley in Sarnia. I'm proud to say that there are roots there from both sides of the family. Shortly after my parents—my dad's family came here from Czechoslovakia. They settled down in Sarnia. My mom's from Petrolia and the pride they had—

Mr. Robert Bailey: A hard oil town.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Exactly, a hard oil town—the \$10 bill featured the petrochemical valley of Sarnia for some time before it was replaced by a bird.

There's no doubt that the impact of high hydro prices has had a decimating effect on manufacturing employment in the Sarnia area, and my own in Niagara and Hamilton.

I'll give you one example, Madam Speaker. Stanpac in my riding makes high-quality food packaging. It's increasingly important when we're concerned about tampering and keeping products fresh. They're really good at it. It's a great business that, over the years, has grown. Steve Witt, an entrepreneur, and his son help to run it—a great team.

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They were so successful, they were able to acquire a similar plant down in Texas. Because their business is growing across North America—that's good news. Here's the catch, though: When they look at their hydro bill on a per-kilowatt hour basis in Smithville, near where I live, compared to Texas, it is 100% more expensive in Ontario. To them, that equates to \$650,000 per annum. Imagine how many more people you could put on payroll.

Looking at the next expansion—a new product, a new assembly line, hiring more women and men in good manufacturing jobs—it's going to be awfully tempting to put those jobs in Texas. They love Smithville; that's where they're from. They would do everything in their power to keep jobs in Ontario. But sooner or later, as they say, the rubber hits the road. If the hydro bills are double on good jobs and they increase, as the member from Sarnia-Lambton said, I'm worried that the last person out is going to have to shut off the lights.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm once again privileged to be able to stand in the House today and speak to Bill 135 in third reading. Again, I will state my uncomforness with this bill as it is. I'm concerned that the government took no amendments from the opposition on this bill, and now we have the exact same bill in front of us in third reading as we did in second, when we had many people come before the committee who had serious problems with the bill as it is.

The hydro prices in this province—we should be doing something to take the politics out of our energy file, and yet this bill formalizes it that much stronger, allowing the minister to make all the rules. Quite frankly, that's a problem, as we've seen in the past when it came to fundraising. The Minister of Energy was one of the ministers who was charged with having a quota within his file. So it's concerning that we're putting him formally in charge of our energy file, something that people in this province count on to keep the lights on, to keep the fridge cold—we count on hydro for everything in this province.

We have a hydro system that is being sold off to the private sector, so it's concerning that we are putting all of the eggs into the minister's basket and are just supposed to trust him with our energy file when, quite frankly, the Liberals have made an awful mess of our energy system. The people of Ontario are definitely paying the price for it, and I think it's incumbent on us to make sure that we do have third reading and we do stand up for the people in our ridings.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Sarnia-Lambton to wrap it up.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I thought there was one more two-minute hit, but whatever.

Anyway, I'd like to thank the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, of course the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and the member from Hamilton Mountain for their kind and judicious comments.

I do applaud the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change because I know he does support my bill; he has said so on a couple of occasions. It was Bill 176. It was about converting heavy truck fleets to liquid natural gas, which would obviously come from our abundant supply of natural gas in the Marcellus shale.

I'd like to work with him on that—I really would—because it would definitely reduce greenhouse gases and make the environment cleaner. It's cheaper for industry, which I want to support. It would be cheaper for consumers, because I've heard from the big companies like Loblaws and the bigger ones around the province who want to see their shippers using LNG, liquid natural gas, to bring their product to them. It is such a competitive industry; they could keep their prices down. It would be good for the environment and it would be good for the industry.

I think there was \$233 million set aside. Let's get that money rolling. Whatever we do with this bill, let's get that money rolling and make it available to industry. The technology is out there. I met with them in committee. It was unanimous. No one did not support that bill in committee. I know that's not what we're here to talk about, but it would really go a long way to cleaning up the environment, and it would be better for everybody. Cars aren't creating the pollution; it's these big trucks that are out there. They're only 3% of the traffic on the road, but I think they contribute almost 30% to that environment.

So I'd like to work with the minister on that, too. We can have our back-and-forth on issues, but at the end of the day, I'm a pretty affable guy and I can work with anybody. I'm sure that he and I could agree.

I appreciate the honour to Nova back in my riding today, and I know that comes from your office. I know that they're very happy to get that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise in this House and, today, to speak on Bill 135 on behalf of my caucus colleagues and on behalf of the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane. I'm not sure how interested the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane are in this bill, but they should be.

That's part of the problem with the way our system works and the way a lot of political systems work. A lot of things that people should be interested in—they're busy with their everyday lives, so they send us to debate on their behalf and, hopefully, represent them accurately. I've always tried to do that and I will continue to try to do that.

Before I get into the actual meat of the bill, there are a couple of things that I've heard today in this debate that I would like to comment on. First, there have been several comments from the government side that we've debated this enough and it's time to move on and we used to never even have third reading debate under the Tories. Well, there's a saying, and I'm sure not just in farming, "It's better to measure twice and cut once." As long as

we're talking about things that are relevant to the issue and as long as someone is learning something—and I've learned quite a few things this afternoon—the debate is relevant.

One of the reasons why third reading debate is prolonged, as I have been told, because I haven't been here that long and we've always had third reading debate when I was here, is that the process in second reading was much more—

Hon. David Zimmer: Collegial.

Mr. John Vanthof: "Collegial" was the word that came from the other side. But the committee was expected to actually help make the legislation better, and it's still supposed to do that. We haven't seen committees travel, not just on this bill, but on many bills, and we haven't seen a lot of things.

It would make a difference. I know a lot more about the GTA than I did when I was elected, because I live in the GTA for six months a year. I appreciate much more the problems that the GTA faces. In the GTA, transit is a huge issue. Before I got elected, many of my constituents thought, "Well, they've got all this stuff. What are they complaining about?" I appreciate that now because I see it. I see when people have to take two or three hours to get to work. I see that's a huge issue.

But on the flip side, because committees don't travel or rarely travel, you don't see people from here, who are the majority of the representatives—certainly, on the government, not all, but the majority are from the GTHA. They might not understand the issues that we face. I would like to commend the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. She was recently in our riding, and I'm sure that she gained a different perspective on what we face. We don't face traffic jams, but we have no public transportation.

The people I represent perceive things differently, so that is very important. That's one of the reasons why we perceive that this government, many times, doesn't take the views of the whole province into account because, quite frankly, you don't travel committees and you don't accept very many, if any, amendments to bills.

You have the mandate to govern. You won the election. We're not complaining about that, but you also have the responsibility to govern responsibly. That means that occasionally a good idea comes from the other side on every bill. So the idea that a bill can be drafted and that not one amendment from the opposition has any validity and is shot down—I don't even know what that word is.

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Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Summarily.

Mr. John Vanthof: —summarily, good; thank you—is ridiculous. If you really think it through, it's ridiculous. That's why third reading debates take a long time, because we have to take every opportunity that we can to try to make the position of the rest of the province—of the people for whom everything is not going so well—to make it heard.

If you want less third reading debate in the long term, actually treat the process with more respect, and it will actually work better.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Define "adequate debate." What is it?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. John Vanthof: An adequate process is actually taking the other parties' amendments seriously and not just chop, chop, chop. Or when the other parties say, "Look, this bill, or another bill, should be travelled, because it has a huge impact on other areas of the province," to actually take that seriously and not say, "Ah, well." That's not happening now, and that's why you're getting prolonged debates. That's why. It's not us. It's the way the government is governing, or trying to govern.

The next issue is—and I'm not sure how to handle this one yet, and I talked about it in my two minutes—this bill is the good, the bad and the ugly, right? The Western theme. The good is that they're actually looking at water conservation. I'm not opposed to that. The bad is, we don't know how they're going to do that and how it's going to impact other industries. But the ugly is where they're giving total power to the Minister of Energy to control the energy system.

Now, if the energy system had been running fantastically for everybody in the province, maybe you could say, "Well, these guys are just stalling for nothing." But when you look at smart meters and moving the gas plants—smart meters cost a couple of billion. Moving the gas plants cost a billion. Cancelling offshore wind turbines—who knows how much that's going to cost? The plan hasn't been working very well so far. And each one of those decisions has been a political decision.

Hon. David Zimmer: A what?

Mr. John Vanthof: A political decision. Moving the gas plants was a political decision. Cancelling the offshore wind turbines was a political decision. So again, it was a political decision.

What this act does is put even more pressure on the minister to be forced to make political decisions, and that might not be good for the people of the province of Ontario. That's the issue.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Obviously, I am honoured to be heckled by the ministers from the other side—honoured—because that's a sign: If you're not being heckled, no one is listening. Obviously, at five to 6 on Thursday afternoon, there's actually enough energy left in the ministerial benches to heckle the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, I wouldn't say that. No, I wouldn't say that.

Interjection: No accountability without responsibility.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's the biggest issue that this act—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Madam Speaker, a point of order: Could you please bring my colleagues—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change—okay. All right.

Back to the member.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I'd just like to put it on the record that the Minister of Climate Change is just doing that to make me lose my spot in my notes, which I have done.

The danger with this bill—and we are opposed. We are opposed because this bill—

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a bad bill.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a very bad bill. Even if we believed that the government had very good intentions, the pressure on the Minister of Energy to make decisions that are politically based instead of based on science and truth, and what the province really needs, will be that much greater.

There has been a lot of debate here about the price of energy, the price of hydro. Some members will say, "Well, it's most expensive in Ontario." We'll hear from the government: "No, no, we've got one of the cheapest—specifically in northern Ontario, the commercial energy rate, and blah blah." Well, I've got a different measurement. In my riding, there are businesses—high-energy users—for whom it's cheaper to burn diesel generators than buy from the grid. That is the best measurement that there's something wrong with the energy system. If you can burn diesel and still be cheaper than you can buy power—and these are commercial operators who need a lot of power—that tells you that there's something skewed in the energy system. I don't know how else to explain it.

When the price of diesel goes up a little bit more because of the carbon plan, who knows? That might change. But right now, it's cheaper to burn diesel for hydro in northern Ontario for a commercial business. That's wrong. How our energy system came to that is, quite frankly, beyond belief for many people in Ontario.

We look at other things about how the energy system is working. We've had solar farms built in our area with FIT contracts. For some reason, the contractors didn't get paid because of the milestones in the contract, and everybody washes their hands. The Minister of Energy is not responsible. OPA is not responsible. The company is not responsible. But I have contractors who lost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Why? Because they didn't take the time to actually think the process through. Again, that's one of the reasons why we should take as much time as we need to make sure these things work.

When we see what has happened with our solar farms, with people burning diesel to create power—I've got other people who can't afford their hydro. They've cut the cord. They use little Honda generators for so many hours a day, and the rest of the day, they just don't use power. These are things that tell you that there's something wrong with the system. When we see that and then we see that one of the answers is to give the minister even more power, there's something in that equation that doesn't fit. That's the problem.

We can talk about facts and figures and argue about what's cheapest and what's not cheapest, but I have

people cutting the cord, and not because they want to cut the cord. Hydro is, in my opinion, pretty well a necessity in our modern society, but there are people in the country who are cutting the cord because they can't afford that necessity in the province of Ontario. You can't tell me that that's the right thing. You can't tell me that giving the Minister of Energy even more power to disregard the people of many parts of rural Ontario is a good thing. You can't.

I hope 6 o'clock is coming soon, because I'm running on fumes.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: So you're admitting that you have nothing more to say.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, no. I've got lots of things to talk about, but my things don't come in 30 seconds. My things come in a longer thought process.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: So maybe the problem is that the minister didn't have enough authority.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. In response to the Minister of Climate Change—who shouldn't be heckling me, by the way—it's not a case of the minister having not enough authority; it's a case of bad planning and not taking the whole province into account. What we're really afraid of in northern Ontario is that, once again, with this, the minister won't take the whole province of Ontario into account.

I'll be happy to finish my speech at a later date, Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's 6 o'clock, I will be adjourning the House until Monday, May 16 at 10:30.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Harris, Michael (PC) *	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzi (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitowlin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

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Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

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Daiene Vernile
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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
Steve Clark, Vic Dhillon
Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Chris Ballard, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
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